

Beyond Pleasure and Pressure: A Holistic Framework for Purpose-Oriented Decision-Making in Everyday Life

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Abstract

Everyday decisions regarding food, clothing, footwear, mobile phones, housing, vehicles, and personal responsibilities are influenced by practical requirements as well as habits, comparison, social expectations, and the desire for approval. This paper presents a holistic framework for purpose-oriented decision-making that encourages individuals to examine the fundamental purpose of an object or activity before deciding how to use resources, respond to expectations, or pursue additional preferences. The framework emerged from educational practice at TILS Education An Institute of Communication & Personality Development, where classroom discussions and question-and-answer sessions have invited students to reflect on changes they notice after examining everyday choices through a holistic perspective. Over the past year, more than 200 students have verbally shared reflections indicating that they noticed some change in their thinking or behaviour. This paper considers ten selected student reflections as illustrative qualitative accounts rather than as a representative sample of all students. The accounts relate to consumption, personal presentation, practical use of possessions, financial decisions, and everyday responsibilities. The paper organises these reflections through four stages: identifying purpose, clarifying requirements, examining external influences, and making a considered decision. The findings are exploratory and descriptive; they do not establish causal effects or statistical prevalence. The paper concludes that purpose-oriented reflection may provide a practical educational approach for developing greater awareness and responsibility in everyday decision-making.

Keywords: holistic approach; decision-making; social approval; student reflection; consumption; qualitative educational research

1. Introduction

People make numerous decisions every day. Some appear minor, such as choosing what to eat, what to wear, or which footwear to use. Others involve greater financial or personal consequences, such as buying a mobile phone, selecting a vehicle, planning household expenditure, or deciding how to use time and resources. Although these decisions differ in scale, they often involve a common question: What is the actual purpose of this choice, and what requirements does it need to fulfil?

In everyday life, decisions are not always made through deliberate consideration of purpose and requirements. They may also be influenced by habit, comparison, convenience, social expectations, anticipated criticism, or the desire for approval. These influences are not necessarily harmful in themselves. Social participation, comfort, appearance, recognition, and enjoyment can all be meaningful aspects of life. However, difficulties may arise when such influences become the primary basis for decisions without sufficient reflection on actual needs, available resources, or longer-term consequences.

Research on motivation has distinguished between different kinds of goals and the reasons people pursue them. Deci and Ryan (2000), for example, discuss how the quality of motivation is related to the reasons underlying goal pursuit. Research on social comparison and materialism has also examined how comparison with others may relate to people's material aspirations and evaluations of their circumstances (Kim et al., 2017). These perspectives provide useful background for considering how social influences may enter everyday decisions.

Drawing on the Universal Human Values framework (Gaur et al., 2023), sound decision-making involves consciously examining the holistic purpose of a subject, along with its requirements and implications, rather than relying solely on habitual responses or immediate preferences. Decision-making research has also recognised that people make choices within practical limits rather than always having complete information or unlimited resources. Simon's (1955) account of bounded rationality offers a useful reminder that real-world decisions occur within constraints. A purpose-oriented approach therefore need not demand perfect or exhaustive decision-making. Instead, it can encourage people to pause, identify what a decision is intended to achieve, and consider whether the available choice is reasonably aligned with that purpose.

This paper presents a holistic framework for purpose-oriented decision-making developed through educational practice at TILS Education, Bhilwara, Rajasthan. In classroom discussions and question-and-answer sessions, students have been invited to reflect on everyday objects, activities, and responsibilities. They have been encouraged to examine the purpose of these things, distinguish requirements from additional preferences, and consider how social expectations or comparison may influence their choices.

Over the past year, more than 200 students have verbally shared that they noticed some change in their thinking or behaviour after engaging with this approach. The present paper does not attempt to analyse every response. Instead, it uses ten selected student reflections as illustrative qualitative accounts to explain the framework and explore how students described changes in their everyday thinking.

The paper addresses three questions:

1. How can a holistic, purpose-oriented framework support reflection on everyday decisions?
2. What kinds of changes have students described after reflecting on the purposes and requirements associated with everyday choices?
3. How may these reflections inform educational practice related to awareness, responsibility, and decision-making?

The present paper is exploratory in nature. It proposes a framework for purpose-based decision-making informed by conceptual reflection, classroom discussions, and selected student experiences. It does not claim experimental validation, establish a direct causal relationship between the framework and reported changes, or treat the ten selected student accounts as representative of all students who participated in the discussions.

Pleasure, Pressure, and Purpose: A Three-P Perspective on Decision-Making

The present paper additionally introduces a three-P perspective - pleasure, pressure, and purpose to examine influences on individual decision-making. Pleasure refers to the desire for social approval, recognition, or the perception of living a desirable life in the eyes of others. Pressure arises when decisions are shaped primarily by external expectations, persuasion, or perceived social obligations. Under the influence of either, individuals may overlook the underlying purpose of the subject or activity being considered. The proposed framework therefore emphasises examining the holistic purpose and actual requirements of a decision before which allow personal gratification or external influences to determine its direction. This perspective seeks to encourage conscious reflection and a more balanced approach to everyday decision-making.

2. Conceptual Framework: From Social Approval to Purpose-Oriented Decision-Making

The framework proposed in this paper begins with a distinction between the fundamental purpose of an object or activity and the additional influences that may shape decisions about it. For example, the primary purpose of food is to provide nourishment through its nutritional value, while also offering taste, enjoyment, cultural meaning, and social connection. The core purpose of clothing is to provide protection and comfort, while also ensuring suitability for different occasions and social settings. Similarly, a mobile phone primarily serves to support communication, learning, navigation, and work.

A holistic approach does not require individuals to reject comfort, beauty, pleasure, recognition, or social participation. Rather, it invites them to examine whether these considerations are being included consciously and proportionately, or whether they are overriding the purpose and requirements of a decision.

Stage 1: Identify the fundamental purpose

The individual begins by asking what an object, activity, or responsibility is primarily intended to fulfil. This question creates a starting point for reflection before considering particular brands, quantities, status associations, or social expectations.

Stage 2: Clarify actual requirements

The individual considers what is reasonably required in the relevant circumstances. Requirements may vary according to health, climate, work, family responsibilities, financial resources, personal preferences, and practical conditions. The aim is not to impose a universal standard of "enough," but to encourage context-sensitive inner examination through what is universally & perennially right in this situation.

Stage 3: Examine additional influences

The individual reflects on whether habit, comparison, anticipated criticism, convenience, status, or the desire for approval is influencing the decision. These factors are not automatically dismissed. Instead, the individual considers their relevance and whether they are consistent with the core & actual purpose and requirements already identified.

Stage 4: Make a considered decision

The individual considers the purpose, requirements, available resources, preferences, and likely consequences together. The consequential decision may involve purchasing something, continuing to use an existing possession, postponing a purchase, sharing resources, changing a habit, or making no change at all. The framework is therefore not a rule that always recommends less consumption or fewer possessions. Its central proposal is that decisions become more deliberate when people examine their purpose and requirements rather than responding automatically to external expectations.

3. Methodology**3.1 Research approach**

This paper adopts an exploratory qualitative approach informed by educational practice. It draws on classroom question-and-answer interactions and student reflections gathered during teaching activities at TILS Education over approximately one year. The classroom discussions were part of an educational process in which students were invited to examine everyday objects, activities, and decisions through a holistic approach. Students were encouraged to consider the purpose of particular things, the requirements they fulfil, and the possible influence of habit, comparison, or social approval. The present paper uses ten selected student reflections to illustrate the kinds of changes students described. These accounts are not treated as a statistically representative sample, and the paper does not attempt to estimate how frequently particular changes occurred among all students.

3.2 Classroom context and student responses

During the preceding year, students attending classes communication & PD classes at TILS Education participated in discussions and question-and-answer sessions about everyday decision-making. Prompts invited them to reflect on whether they had noticed any changes after considering the purpose and requirements associated with particular objects or activities. More than 200 students have verbally specified in these classroom interactions that they noticed tangible change in their thinking, choices, or behaviour. The present paper focuses on ten selected reflections because a detailed presentation of every student's response is beyond the scope of this exploratory paper. The ten accounts are used as

illustrative examples. They should not be interpreted as the only students who reported change, nor as evidence that all students experienced similar outcomes.

3.3 Nature of the material

The reflections were primarily gathered through spoken classroom responses rather than standardised questionnaires or formal interviews. No numerical scale was used to measure change; therefore, the material is treated as qualitative student reflections. Documented responses were verified against available records, while undocumented accounts are presented as cautious paraphrases rather than verbatim quotations. The purpose of the paper is to describe the reflections and relate them to the proposed framework. It is not to claim a formal interview study or a systematic thematic analysis beyond the work actually undertaken.

3.4 Selection and interpretation

The ten reflections were selected to provide illustrative examples of students' thinking about everyday decisions. The accounts relate to areas such as food, clothing, footwear, mobile phones, housing, vehicles, and personal responsibilities. The reflections are interpreted in relation to the framework's central concepts: identifying purpose, clarifying requirements, examining additional influences, and making considered decisions. The analysis is descriptive and exploratory. It does not establish that the framework alone caused the reported changes, and it does not assign numerical frequencies to the themes.

3.5 Ethical considerations and Researcher reflexivity

The student reflections are presented without identifying details, and consent was obtained for the use of selected experiences in this paper. The author acknowledges that classroom responses may be influenced by the teacher-student relationship, students' inclination to provide positive feedback, or their understanding of the educational approach being discussed.

3.6 Educational Context and Participant Diversity

The reflections emerged from communication and personality development sessions conducted at TILS Education, an institute that provides learning opportunities to individuals across diverse age groups, educational backgrounds, and professional fields. The participants included school-going and college-going students, as well as doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, advocates, professors, and other working professionals. The institute welcomes learners ranging approximately from 10 to 60 years of age, creating a diverse learning environment that extends beyond conventional academic coaching. The classroom discussions therefore involved individuals with varied life experiences, educational journeys, and professional perspectives.

4. Findings and Observations

The selected reflections suggest that students used the holistic approach to reconsider the relationship between purpose, requirements, social influences, and everyday choices. The

examples below are organised by area of reflection. They are illustrative accounts, not a claim that each area corresponds to a separate participant or that all ten students reported every type of change.

Table 1. Illustrative areas of student reflection and their relationship to purpose-oriented decision-making

Area of everyday life	Reflection or change described in the selected accounts	Connection with the framework
Food and eating habits	One student described becoming more attentive to eating habits after reflecting on the purpose of food, including nourishment and personal well-being.	Identifying the purpose of food while also recognising taste, enjoyment, and health-related requirements.
Footwear and possessions	A student who previously maintained a larger collection of footwear described giving some pairs to students in need and using a smaller number according to activities and practical requirements.	Examining actual use, available possessions, and the difference between requirements and accumulation.
Clothing and personal presentation	A reflection concerned reducing reliance on purchases for social approval and considering the difference between appropriate presentation and personal worth.	Recognising that clothing may serve practical and expressive purposes without making external approval the sole basis for self-evaluation.
Mobile phones and technology	Students reflected on the practical functions of a phone, such as communication and everyday use.	Clarifying the requirements a device needs to fulfil before considering additional preferences or status-related influences.
Housing and expenditure	A student reflection described reconsidering expenses and planning expenditure more deliberately rather than automatically increasing expenditures.	Connecting requirements, resources, priorities, and longer-term consequences.
Vehicles and transport	A student reflection concerned continuing to use an existing scooter, postponing a purchase, or considering shared travel in relation to practical needs and available resources.	Evaluating whether a new purchase is required in the present circumstances or whether existing resources meet the purpose.

Work and personal responsibilities	Reflections included considering whether decisions about work and responsibilities support learning, skill development, and contribution.	Bringing purpose, personal development, resources, and circumstances into the decision rather than relying on a single external measure.
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Note. This table presents illustrative areas reflected in the selected student accounts and supporting material. It is intended to provide a qualitative overview rather than a frequency-based representation. The categories may overlap and should not be interpreted as representing distinct students or the entire participant group.

4.1 Greater attention to purpose

A recurring feature of the selected reflections is the use of purpose as a starting point for reconsidering everyday choices. In relation to food, for example, the reflection described greater attention to eating habits after considering nourishment and well-being. This does not mean that taste or enjoyment became irrelevant. Rather, the student's reflection connected eating with a broader understanding of what food is intended to provide. A similar form of reflection appeared in relation to possessions. The footwear example involved considering how many items were being used, what was practically required for different activities, and whether some possessions could be shared with others. The reported change was not simply a reduction in the number of items. It also involved a different way of thinking about use, need, and available resources.

4.2 Distinguishing requirements from social influences

The reflections concerning clothing and mobile phones illustrate how social expectations may enter personal decisions. Clothing can support protection, comfort, suitability, and self-expression. A mobile phone can provide communication and practical services. However, decisions about either may also be influenced by comparison, brand image, or the anticipation of how others will respond. The selected reflections suggest that students began to examine these influences more consciously. The framework does not require rejecting scalarization or presentation. Instead, it invites individuals to avoid treating approval as the only or decisive measure of a choice.

4.3 Considering resources and consequences

The examples related to housing, expenditure, vehicles, and transport connect purpose-oriented reflection with resource use. A decision may involve asking whether an existing resource is sufficient, whether a purchase is necessary at the present time, or whether expenditure can be planned more purposely. Such reflection is context-dependent. A vehicle, house, or device may be essential in one person's circumstances and unnecessary in another's. The framework therefore does not prescribe a fixed level of consumption. It encourages individuals to examine their own requirements, responsibilities, resources, and likely consequences.

4.4 Reflection on work and responsibility

The selected material also indicates that purpose-oriented thinking can extend beyond material possessions. Decisions about work and personal responsibilities may be examined in relation to the core purpose of this occupation or profession, skill development, practical needs, and long-term direction. This does not imply that financial remuneration, working conditions, or professional opportunities are unimportant. Rather, these considerations can be examined alongside the core & holistic purpose of the activity and the individual's circumstances.

5. Discussion

The reflections presented in this paper provide an exploratory illustration of how students may use purpose-oriented questions to reconsider everyday decisions. Their significance lies less in establishing a measurable effect and more in showing how a simple reflective process can be introduced into educational conversations. The framework begins with a question about purpose, encouraging students to pause before accepting a familiar habit or social expectation as sufficient justification for a decision. The subsequent step, clarifying requirements, connects this broader reflection with the individual's circumstances, resources, responsibilities, and preferences.

The third step, examining additional influences, is particularly relevant to decisions shaped by comparison or anticipated approval. Social approval is not inherently negative, as people live in relationships and communities where expectations may communicate legitimate needs concerning safety, cooperation, respect, and suitability. However, when approval becomes the primary basis for decisions, individuals may give less attention to their own examined understanding of requirements and consequences.

The framework may therefore be explored through the following reflective questions:

- Purpose: What is the underlying core purpose of this decision?
- Requirements: What are my actual needs, circumstances, resources, responsibilities, and preferences?
- Additional influences: To what extent are comparison, social expectations, or anticipated approval influencing my decision?
- Consequences: What may be the immediate and long-term consequences of this decision?
- Reflection: Does this decision align with my examined understanding of its purpose and requirements?

The framework therefore proposes neither withdrawal from society nor rejection of personal preferences. It encourages a more thoughtful relationship with external influences. Individuals can listen to feedback, participate in social life, and value appearance or comfort while also considering whether a particular choice is aligned with its purpose. This approach is compatible with the broader idea that human motivation involves more than the immediate outcome of an action. Deci and Ryan (2000) discuss the importance of the

reasons underlying goal pursuit. In the context of everyday decisions, asking why a person wants a particular object or outcome may help clarify whether the decision is connected to practical needs, personal values, external expectations, or a combination of these factors.

The reflections also relate to social comparison and material aspirations. Kim et al. (2017) examine associations among social comparison, personal relative deprivation, and materialism. The present paper does not test these relationships. However, the students' reflections on clothing, phones, possessions, and expenditure illustrate why it may be useful in education to discuss how comparison can influence perceptions of what is necessary or desirable. The framework also recognises the practical limits of decision-making. People make choices with limited time, information, money, and attention. Simon's (1955) account of bounded rationality is relevant here because the proposed process is not intended to produce perfect decisions. It offers a manageable sequence of questions that can be used in ordinary circumstances: What is the purpose? What is required? What influences my preference? What decision is reasonable given my situation?

5.1 Educational implications

The classroom Q&A approach may offer educators a practical way to connect conceptual learning with students' lived experiences. Rather than discussing decision-making only through abstract definitions, educators can invite students to examine familiar situations such as food choices, clothing, mobile phones, transport, or personal expenditure.

A possible classroom activity is to ask students to select an everyday object or activity and reflect on four questions:

1. What is its fundamental purpose?
2. What do I actually require from it in my present circumstances?
3. What other influences may be shaping my preference?
4. What decision would be reasonable after considering purpose, requirements, resources, and consequences?

Students may then discuss whether their understanding or behaviour has changed, remained the same, or become more multifaceted. A response indicating no change should also be welcomed. The purpose of reflection is not to encourage students to produce a preferred answer, but to support considered examination. The teacher's role is important. Since students may wish to please an educator or provide an expected response, classroom discussions should allow disagreement, uncertainty, and different conclusions. Students must not be encouraged to interpret every purchase, preference, or desire for recognition as evidence of poor judgment.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

The present study has some limitations. First, the reflections were gathered primarily through classroom question-and-answer interactions rather than formal interviews or standardised instruments. Second, the ten selected accounts serve as illustrative examples from a larger

pool of student responses and are not representative of the entire participant group. Third, the study does not include numerical measures of change, a comparison group, or an experimental design; therefore, causal conclusions regarding the framework's effectiveness cannot be established.

Additionally, some responses were documented, while others may have been recalled or paraphrased. The teacher - student relationship may also have influenced participants' responses. Furthermore, the reflections originate from a single educational context and should not be generalised to other populations or institutions without further investigation. Future research may employ systematic data collection through written reflections, student journals, or structured interviews, supported by transparent participant-selection and qualitative analysis procedures. Longitudinal and cross-context studies could further examine the continued application of purpose-oriented questions and the framework's relevance across diverse educational settings.

6. Conclusion

This paper has presented a holistic framework for purpose-oriented decision-making and explored ten selected student reflections arising from classroom discussions at TILS Education. More than 200 students have verbally indicated that they noticed evident change in their thinking or behaviour after engaging with the approach; the present paper uses ten selected accounts to illustrate the nature of those reflections. The framework encourages individuals to identify the purpose of an object or activity, clarify actual requirements, examine influences such as habit or social approval, and make a considered decision in light of their circumstances and resources. The student reflections illustrate how this process may be applied to food, clothing, footwear, technology, expenditure, transport, and personal responsibilities.

The findings are exploratory and descriptive. They do not establish statistical prevalence or prove that the framework caused the reported changes. Nevertheless, the reflections suggest that purpose-oriented questions can provide a practical starting point for classroom conversations about awareness and everyday decision-making. The central educational proposition is not to reject comfort, enjoyment, recognition, or social participation. It is to help learners consider these influences alongside purpose, requirements, resources, and consequences. In this way, decision-making may become more reflective and less automatic, while remaining responsive to individual circumstances and social life.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.