

Decisions, Decisions: Understanding How the Need and Ability to Achieve Closure Relate to
Mental Health and Wellbeing

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

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Abstract

Previous research has shown that the need for closure is positively related to mental health problems and the ability to achieve closure is negatively related to mental health problems. However, previous research has not established the mechanisms of these relations or considered the aetiology of the need and ability to achieve closure. In the present body of work, I investigated decision-making and social factors as potential mediators of the relations of the need and ability to achieve closure with mental health. Regarding decision-making, Studies 1-3 showed that process regret, option regret, and decision-making stress consistently mediated the relations between the need for closure and mental health and between the ability to achieve closure and mental health. Regarding social factors, Study 4 demonstrated that social support mediated the relation between the ability to achieve closure and mental health, but not the relation between the need for closure and mental health. Increased stress in response to everyday stressors also mediated the relations between the need for closure and mental health and between the ability to achieve closure and mental health. Regarding aetiology, Study 4 showed that the need and ability to achieve closure were both significantly related to attachment styles. Study 5 confirmed that both a high need for closure and a low ability to achieve closure longitudinally predict poorer mental health, but did not show any significant mediation effects, possibly due to low power. These findings highlight the importance of future research about the relations between decision quality and need and ability to achieve closure. This knowledge would help us to understand why those with a high need or low ability to achieve closure experience elevated regret, decision stress, and stress about everyday stressors and consequently develop interventions to improve their mental health. The relations of the need and ability to achieve closure with attachment style demonstrate the importance of developing an integrated theoretical framework that addresses the aetiology of the closure constructs.