ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

INTUITION AND DECISION-MAKING: EXPLORING THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND GUT FEELINGS

MUSARRAT FIDA
Nursing Instructor, CIMS Nursing College (CNC), Multan, Pakistan.
EMAIL: *musarratishfaq@gmail.com*
RIMSHA HAMEED
BScN student, Department of English, CIMS Nursing College CNC Multan, Pakistan. Email: rimshahameed906@gmail.com
SAMRH RAFI
BScN student, Department of English, CIMS Nursing College CNC Multan, Pakistan. Email: samrhrafi15@gmail.com
IQRA AFZAL
BScN student, Department of English, CIMS Nursing College CNC Multan, Pakistan. Email: iqraafzal2012@gmail.com

Abstract
Background. *Often people will say that they make a decision based on a "gut feeling," which is a quick feeling that goes without conscious thought. This is the object of study with respect to psychology, known as intuition, and has grown to be a primary focus of the science of judgment and decision making.* ***Objective.*** *This article will review the nature of intuition in human decision making, its times when it can be trusted, and when it is not.* ***Methodology.*** *Study design: Narrative, literature review. It combines key theoretical and empirical research from two domains—cognitive psychology and decision science—with research from neuroscience. There were no primary data were collected.* ***Major findings.*** *The evidence suggests that there are two processes: fast and automatic intuition (System 1) and slow and effortful analysis (System 2) (Kahneman, 2011). Intuition is not a monolithic phenomenon but can be understood in a number of ways: as a process of pattern recognition acquired through experience (Klein, 1998); as a fast and frugal understanding of very complex problems in an uncertain environment (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011); as a mental shortcut which can give systematic errors (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974); and as a kind of decision making using emotional and bodily information (Damasio, 1994; Bechara et al., 1997). One of the major findings is that intuition is reliable in "learnable" contexts, such as those that are regular, and where a person has an abundance of feedback from experience (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).* ***Conclusion.*** *Feelings are not to be dismissed as wrong or irrational, but rather a valuable cognitive resource that is suited to certain contexts, and not others. The best decision-making is through intuition and analysis, not a competition between.*

1. Introduction

1.1 What Is a "Gut Feeling"?

A sense of the unknown, a feeling in the gut, is the common parlance used to describe intuition, which comes quickly into awareness, feels compelling to the individual who has it, and is hard to articulate in other terms. Intuitive thought is rapid, automatic, and typically unconscious, whereas working out a problem step by step is slow, deliberate, and conscious (Betsy LeCato, M.A., 2011). The feeling of "just knowing" may be enigmatic, but research indicates that it is often a learned process that takes place very quickly (Gigerenzer, 2007).

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

1.2 Intuition in Decision Making

Intuition is important as it underlies many times every day and professional decisions. People make decisions—about people, risk, and options—more quickly than they analyze, based on impressions and feelings, rather than reasons; and impressions and feelings come before reason (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). Thus, comprehension of the mechanisms underlying these quick judgments, and of their accuracy, plays a crucial role in the understanding of human behavior and the making of real-world judgments.

1.3 Why the Topic Matters

The stakes are practical. When time is limited and the situation is uncertain, such as when doctors, pilots, managers, and emergency responders need to make decisions, they don't have time for a thorough analysis. Whether their instincts are accurate or not directly affects safety and welfare. Meanwhile, a considerable amount of research has established that intuitive judgment tends to be systematically inaccurate, so the issue of when gut feelings aid and when they impede decision-making arises (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

1.4 Research Gap

Intuition has been explored from quite varied perspectives by different research traditions: some see intuition as reliable, some less so; and it has been presented as conflicting. Fewer efforts have been made to pull them together as a unified and easy-to-read account, elucidating the circumstances in which it is right and when it is wrong. This is an article that fills this void.

1.5 Objectives of the Article

The article has the following goals:

1. To understand what intuition is and where it fits in the Dual-process view of the mind;
2. To consider key psychological and neuroscientific theories of intuitive decision making;
3. To recognize when intuition is a good or bad indicator;
4. To think about the nature of intuition in practice; and

To provide real-life applications of the wise use of intuition.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dual-Process Theory

There are two types of thinking which are commonly distinguished. System 1 is fast, automatic, effortless, and emotional; System 2 is slow, controlled, effortful, and analytical (Kahneman 2011). Intuition is equivalent to System 1: impressions and feelings are formed all the time, continuously, without being given any thought by the conscious mind (System 2), which may then either endorse, adjust, or override the impressions and feelings produced by System 1. This difference is shown in Figure 1. It is important to remember that the two systems are not competing, but rather are interacting and that most judgments are made in conjunction with the two.

2.2 Heuristics and Biases

Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (1974) practiced the heuristics-and-biases tradition, which demonstrated that intuitive judgments are based on “mental shortcuts” like representativeness, availability, and anchoring. These heuristics are useful and often effective, but can lead to predictable errors, such as when estimating probabilities on the basis of instances that come readily to mind. This tradition is not eager to believe what one "feels," and it cautions about the importance of having strong intuition, which can be wrongly imposed.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

2.3 Expertise and Naturalistic Decision Making

A more sanguine account is based on research into the actual decision-making process of experts in actual settings. Expert intuition is the ability of an expert to identify meaningful cues and then respond to those cues without consciously weighing the various options, according to Gary Klein's work on naturalistic decision making (1998), which is the subject of this study. This way, good intuition isn't a random imagination; it's condensed knowledge, a knowledge that was processed and put into a state of automation.

2.4 Fast-and-Frugal Heuristics

Gerd Gigerenzer and his team say that simple heuristics can be very effective, not because they lack information, but because they don't. Strategies that rely on just a few cues can be as effective, or more effective, as more complex analyses in uncertain environments with limited data, as is the case of ecological rationality (Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier, 2011). From this point of view, gut feelings are an adaptive toolbox of heuristics that are adapted to the nature of the environment (Gigerenzer, 2007).

2.5 The Neuroscience of Gut Feelings

According to neuroscience, intuition is related to the body and emotions. According to a somatic marker hypothesis by Antonio Damasio (1994), somatic and emotional markers label options as good or bad and influence their choice. In a seminal study performed with a gambling task, Bechara et al. (1997) found that healthy individuals started to choose from the rewarding decks of cards, and that they experienced anticipatory physiological responses to the winning decks before they could explicitly explain the winning strategy; patients with prefrontal lesions did not. Later research, however, suggested that participants knew more than they could report (Maia & McClelland, 2004), leading to the challenge of such an interpretation.

3. Methodology

This article is not a systematic review, but a narrative literature-based review, nor a primary empirical study. No experiments, surveys, or original data analysis were performed. The analysis is followed up by seminal and later studies from cognitive psychology, decision science, and cognitive neuroscience.

Sources were chosen because they were influential, relevant to intuition and decision making, and credible; including various perspectives so that the positive and negative aspects of intuition in decision making were represented. The review is based on already published research, and therefore has limitations, as discussed in Section 8, and does not make causal statements.

4. Findings from Existing Literature

4.1 Intuition as Rapid, Learned Cognition

In all traditions, intuition is described as rapid, automatic, and to a great extent unconscious thinking, based on past experiences (Kahneman, 2011; Gigerenzer, 2007). It summarises the difference between this intuitive way and deliberate analysis in Figure 1, and explains the comparison in more detail in Table 1.

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

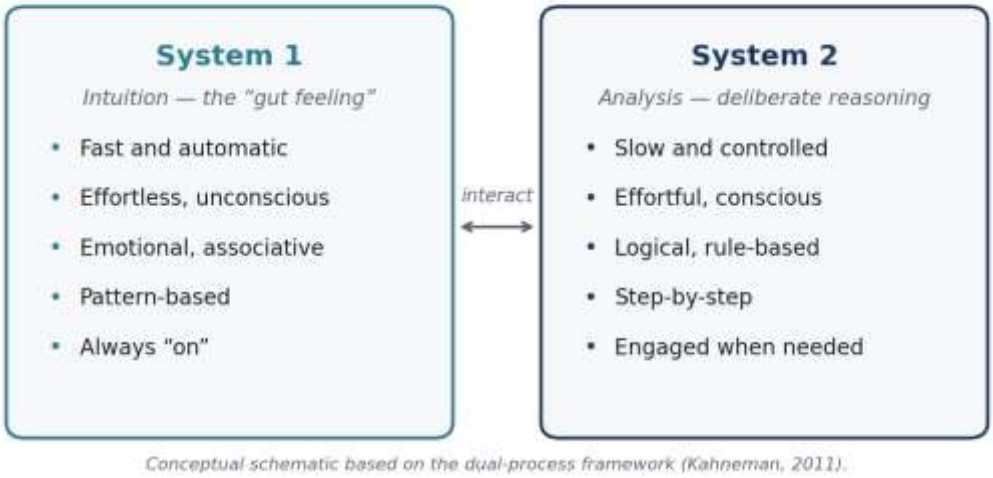


Figure 1. Dual process perspective of intuition and analysis (Kahneman, 2011)

Table 1. Cognitive abilities of Intuitive and Analytical thinking

Feature	System 1 (Intuition)	System 2 (Analysis)
Speed	Fast	Slow
Effort	Effortless, automatic	Effortful, controlled
Awareness	Largely non-conscious	Conscious
Basis	Emotion, association, pattern	Logic, rules, calculation
Typical use	Everyday, rapid judgments	Problems that are new and/or difficult.

Note. The dual-process model is based on Kahneman's (2011) model.

When Intuition is reliable 4.2 When Intuition is reliable.

The key synthesis is from Kahneman and Klein (2009), who, despite being from two opposing traditions, were able to agree on the conditions for trustworthy intuition. The development of a skilled intuition takes place under two conditions: the environment is regular and predictable (high validity), and the individual has had a long period of exposure to the regularities, with consistent feedback. As in the game of chess, or in firefighting, intuitive expertise can be very precise (Klein, 1998).

4.3 When Intuition Fails

Where the validity of the situation is low or where feedback is delayed or weak, this flash of information can lead to a set of confident, but incorrect, impressions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Importantly, the confidence one experiences is not a good predictor of accuracy – people can experience the same level of confidence with valid and invalid intuitions (Kahneman & Klein, 2009). This is why sometimes your gut feelings are right on the money, and sometimes they are all wrong!

The Emotional and Bodily Basis – 4.4

Neuroscience evidence suggests that emotion is not a mere diversional factor of good decision making but sometimes part of it. Patients with damage to brain areas involved in the emotional integration of information are unable to make their choices in everyday life, while normal

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

subjects seem to be driven by emotional cues when making a choice (Damasio, 1994; Bechara et al., 1997). It is also debated whether such guidance is totally unconscious (Maia & McClelland, 2004), so this evidence is taken as strong support for the role of emotion in decisions, but not as evidence of a purely unconscious mechanism.

4.5 Reconciling the Perspectives

These accounts are NOT mutually exclusive. Table 2 relates the key ideas to their main perspectives. As a group, they propose a class of processes that are quick: pattern recognition, heuristics, and emotional tagging, whose accuracy is tied to the degree to which the process is applicable to the situation.

Table 2. Key views on intuition related to decision making.

Perspective	Core idea	Key source
Dual-process theory	Intuition (System 1) is in concert with analysis (System 2).	Kahneman (2011)
Heuristics and biases	Useful shortcuts are helpful, but can be a systematic error.	Tversky & Kahneman (1974)
Naturalistic decision making	Expert intuition is learning patterns.	Klein (1998)
Fast-and-frugal heuristics	With uncertain circumstances, simple rules can be accurate	Gigerenzer & Gaissmaier (2011)
Somatic marker hypothesis	Emotion and body cues help to direct choice	Damasio (1994)

Note. Perspectives are complementary, that is, each one is a snapshot of an aspect of intuitive judgement.

5. Discussion

The arguments about the good or bad of intuition are poorly phrased, according to the evidence. Intuition is not always correct and not always incorrect, but depends on the way in which it has been developed and applied. Obviously, the heuristics-and-biases and naturalistic traditions of thinking are not in opposition, since fast judgment is advantageous in common domains where learning is relatively easy, but not so in noisy domains where learning is more difficult, and the validity of the domains is low (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

It is crucial to distinguish known facts from not yet answered questions. Those intuitions are speedy and effortless; those heuristics can lead to systematic biases; and emotion plays a role in decision making—these are all well-supported conclusions (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Damasio, 1994). In contrast, the exact degree of unconsciousness of the process of being guided intuitively is discussed (Maia & McClelland, 2004). This is why this distinction is important: to prevent you from taking things too far in either direction–over-trusting or over-dismissing your gut.

6. Applications in Professional Decision Making

This is evident in various professions in practice. Learned pattern recognition is also important in medicine, whereby an experienced clinician often makes a diagnosis before he or she has the time to formulate the reasons. Professional training is essential in aviation and emergency response and relies on training intuition to enable rapid response in stressful situations (Klein, 1998). In management and finance, on the other hand, a host of decisions are made in low-

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

validity settings where strong intuitions must be challenged and checked by careful analysis (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). The lesson to be learned is that intuition is to be built up where it can be learned and tested where it cannot be learned.

7. Using Intuition Wisely: Practical Implications

When collating the evidence, it was noted that there are some practical principles:

6. Adopt the right tool for the job. Avoid using intuition more in familiar and predictable areas; use analysis more in unfamiliar and unpredictable areas (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).
7. Build expertise deliberately. In order to develop trustworthy intuition, it is necessary to have many hours of practice with immediate and correct feedback (Klein, 1998).

Don't assume that somebody is correct just because they are confident. Rely on a hunch as a tentative theory, rather than a certainty (Kahneman & Klein, 2009).

9. Combine, don't choose. Develop intuition to come up with fast ideas and test those ideas with analysis, particularly when making important decisions.
11. Be aware of any biases. Watch for shortcuts that are likely to lead to errors, like availability and anchoring (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974).

8. Limitations

There are a number of caveats to mention. The analysis is literature-based and therefore relies on the coverage and interpretation of earlier published research; the different traditions in literature provide more or less distinct definitions of what is meant by "intuition", making it difficult to do direct comparisons. A number of interesting results, especially in the domain of neuroscience in decision-making processes, continue to be controversial and subject to reinterpretation (Maia & McClelland, 2004). Frequently, this complexity is not replicated in much laboratory-based research, and evidence is often drawn from specific populations or domains and may not be generalised to other populations or domains.

9. Conclusion

The gut feeling is a valid and significant human factor in decision making and not a lack of reason. The studies examined here demonstrate that intuition is fast, cognitive but learned, and relies on pattern recognition, efficient heuristics and emotions. It is not always accurate, as it is high if the environment is predictable and the person has acquired a lot of knowledge, and low if the environment is unpredictable or feedback is not very good. The safest way to make the decision is then to not opt for intuition or analysis, but to use both—trusting the intuition when it has been proven to be trustworthy, and using deliberate reasoning when it has not. If this is the case, the psychology of gut feeling is a well-balanced and practical approach to making better decisions.

10. References

1. Bechara, A., Damasio, H., Tranel, D., & Damasio, A. R. (1997). Deciding advantageously before knowing the advantageous strategy. Science, 275(5304), 1293–1295. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.275.5304.1293
2. Damasio, A. R. (1994). Descartes' error: Emotion, reason, and the human brain. Putnam.
3. Gigerenzer, G. (2007). Gut feelings: The intelligence of the unconscious. Viking.
4. Gigerenzer, G., & Gaissmaier, W. (2011). Heuristic decision making. Annual Review of Psychology, 62, 451–482. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120709-145346
5. Kahneman, D. (2011). Thinking, fast and slow. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
6. Kahneman, D., & Klein, G. (2009). Conditions for intuitive expertise: A failure to disagree. American Psychologist, 64(6), 515–526. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016755

ISSN E: 3006-1466
ISSN P: 3006-1458
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
CJSSR
CONTEMPORARY JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW
Vol.04 No.01 (2026)

7. Klein, G. (1998). Sources of power: How people make decisions. MIT Press.
8. Maia, T. V., & McClelland, J. L. (2004). A reexamination of the evidence for the somatic marker hypothesis: What participants really know in the Iowa gambling task. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 101(45), 16075–16080. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0406666101
9. Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1974). Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases. Science, 185(4157), 1124–1131. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.185.4157.1124