

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI STUDENTS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF LOCUS OF CONTROL

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Abstract

In a recent definition, “Locus of control is an individual’s belief system regarding the causes of his/her experiences and factors to which the person attributes success or failure”. As a person with internal locus attributes his/her success to his/her own effort and ability. Whereas a person with external locus of control is of the view that success or failure is due to good luck or fate the aim of this study was to explore the. University of Nairobi Students Performance in the Context of Locus of Control The sample size comprised 127 females and 97 males, giving a total of 224 university students. Their age ranged from 20 to 55 years. The participants were all taking psychology as a major subject. A questionnaire comprising 25 pairs of statements was used. Each statement had two options for participants to respond to as normally provided for in the Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale. Based on Rotter’s Locus of Control Scale, there emerged both external and internal locus of control participants in uneven proportions. A chi-square statistical analysis was employed. Calculation of: χ^2 test [2df, N224] = 107.6, $p < 0.001$; which was statistically significant. Thus confirming that, there was a mean significant difference between external internal locus control participants on their performance based on their locus of control. Specifically, externally oriented participants exceeded internally oriented participants. In conclusion. In general, locus of control is closely related to achievement and success in life. Moreover, people who feel in control of a situation may experience a sense of empowerment. Furthermore, individuals with a high sense of mastery in academic work believe that they can control most aspects of their lives. On the other hand, those who are unable to gain mastery in academic performance or to exert influence over their circumstances may feel a sense of helplessness.

Keywords: Rotter, locus of control, internal, external, control, fate students, university, Kenya, Africa

Introduction

By locus of control in Social Psychology is meant the source of control in one’s given in every person’s pattern of behaviour falling into external and internal (Reber, 1985; Rotter, 1966). With external control locus, a person who attributes the control locus of behaviour, as originating from outside self. In other words, one’s failure or success is controlled by outside forces and therefore,

there is not much that can be done to exercise control of such behaviour. In contrast, a person who has internal locus of control holds the view that she or he is responsible for his/her behaviour, as it does not occur on the basis of luck or chance (Joeison, 2017; Kendra, 2017).

In a recent definition, Joeison (2017) expresses as follows: “Locus of control is an individual’s belief system regarding the causes of his/her experiences and factors to which the person attributes success or failure”. As a person with internal locus attributes his/her success to his/her own effort and ability. Such a person is more motivated and likely to successfully acquire new knowledge. Whereas a person with external locus of control is of the view that success or failure is due to good luck or fate. As such, the person is less motivated to learn or engage in a given set of behaviour. According to Kendra (2017):

Locus of control refers to the extent to which people feel that they have

Control over the events that influence their lives. When you are dealing with a challenge in your life, do you feel that you have control over the outcome?

Or do you believe that you are simply at the hands of outside forces?

If you believe that you have control over what happens, then you have what

Psychologists refer to as internal locus of control. If you believe that you have

No control over what happened and that external variables are to blame, then

You have what is known as an external control.

Moreover, Kendra (2017) characterises both personalities as follows:

Internal Locus of Control

- 1- They take responsibility for their actions.
- 2- They are less influenced by others views/opinions
- 3- They do better in engaging in tasks done at their pace.
- 4- They command strong sense of self-efficiency.
- 5- They work hard to achieve what they want.
- 6- When faced with challenge, they are confident.
- 7- They are happier and more independent.
- 8- In their work place, they are more successful.
- 9- They are physically healthier.

External Locus of Control

- 1 Blame outside forces for their circumstance.
- 2 In success, they attribute it outside forces.
- 3 Often they are helpless or powerless, when they encounter problems.
- 4 They do not believe they can change their situation by use of their own effort.

Based on the dimension of personality. Many researchers have further explored a relationship between locus of control and academic performance, as reflected at various levels of Education. In a similar manner, the present investigation aimed at assessing the University of Nairobi students' locus of control in the context of their academic performance in a Psychology Course. Such objective was motivated by literature review of locus of control in relationship to academic achievement. For example, Barzergar (2011) explored the relationship between learning style locus of control and academic performance of University students in Iran. For this purpose two questionnaires, namely, Kolb learning Style and Rotter Locus of Control were administered to 700 participating students. For data analysis correlation index, multiple-regression, as well as analysis of variance.

The results showed that there was no correlation between gender and their learning styles, nor was there a relationship between locus of control and academic performance.

Manichander (2014) subscribes to the tenet that in academic performance, internal locus of control students outperform their counterparts, who fall under the category of externally locus control-based students. In addition to this, Manichander (2014) adds another dimension by pointing out that there are mediating and motivating and cognitive reactions, which draw a difference between internally and externally locus controlled individuals.

Based on this reasoning, it is argued that a relationship between locus of control and academic achievement internal beliefs are associated with greater superior performance. On the basis of age range, this holds true more among adolescents than children or children. The relationship is more prevalent among males than females.

Marthur (2014) explored a relationship between college students and their corresponding academic performance. The sample consisted of 60 participants whose age ranged from 18-21. These were administered two questionnaires, namely, Locus of Control I (inventory and Life experience Inventory. Those who had a higher score in internality performed better academically than those

who had a high score in externality. The author concludes thus, “It can thus be concluded on the basis of the above research made that, College students with internal locus of control can be expected to perform better in their academics and also have a positive attitude towards life, whereas those with an external locus of control are not expected to perform, as well as the previous case” (Page 82).

Nordin, Yusof, Zakaria and Dalin (2014) examined the locus of control of teacher trainees. They were further interested in assessing gender, academic achievement and programme. There were 191 participants selected. The results revealed that trainee teachers were predominantly characterised as internally locus of control in their perception and behaviour. However, there were no differences on the basis of both gender and the programme pursued.

Mkumbo and Amani (2012) sought to explore what university students attribute their success and failure. Basing on the attribution theory, as reflected in Rotter’s Locus of Control, the study investigated the extent to which they were either internally or externally controlled or both. The sample. The sample comprised 260 (158 males and 102 females) undergraduate students at the University of Dares Salaam. Their mean age was 24.6 years. The results reflected that the students significantly attributed their academic performance to internal, stable and controllable factors; compared to failure being attributed to external and uncontrollable factors by those who were externally controlled. It was further noted that female students were more internally driven in locus control than was the case with male students.

Elliot (2014) advances the view that there is an increase of female students pursuing Construction Education at College in the USA. For this reason, it is relevant to understand gender differences among Construction Management Students. The variables assessed were psychological constructs, such as self-efficacy, locus of control and motivation, which have a bearing on human behaviour and performance in both occupational, as well as educational spheres. From two USA universities 178 participants were selected and tested.

The results were that male participants outperformed females in construction training and self-efficacy. Females were more internal in their scores on locus of control. On the other hand, males scored better on motivation towards Construction Education. It is thus concluded that the investigation, “provides initial insights into the role of self-efficacy motivation and LOC in gender

disparity among students enrolled in Construction in enrolled in Construction Management Programmes” P6).

Ogolla, Aloka and Raburu (2016) assessed the relationship between locus of control and stress management among high school principal in Homabay County, Kenya. Based on a population of 295 principals stratified random sample of 169 principals were selected. Both locus of control and stress management questionnaires were used for measuring the participants. Analysis of variance was used for statistical analysis of the data.

The results revealed that principals who had internal locus of control had a mean of 3.37 and standard deviation of 0.28, compared to a mean of 1.76 and standard deviation of 0.271 for external locus of control. The mean difference was statistically significant in both locus of control and stress management scores. Thus confirming the need for stress management for high school principals in HomaBay County.

Mujlatun and Ashal (2017) explored Bank employee’s locus of control and their performance in banking setting. The sample was made up of 65 respondents. The results showed that their locus of control was a good predictor of their good performance, particularly those who had an internal locus of control. Khir, Redzuan, Hamsan and Shahrimm (2015) sought to determine a relationship between locus of control and academic achievement among 402 high school students in Malaysia. The results observed were that the majority of participants (62%) had a leaning towards external locus of control. It was also shown that there was a relationship between age and locus of control. The older one gets, the more the adolescent, the more the adolescent becomes, the more she/he is more internally oriented. In terms of academic achievement, those who were internally oriented, the better their academic achievement. Students who had low achievement were externally oriented. There was no gender difference reported.

In Mexico, Garcia, Delgado, Llanes, Fernandez and Pando (2017) undertook an investigation to compare the profiles of locus of control among University students. The total sample was 1537 (820 females and 717 males) with a mean age of 20.38 (SD=1.8) and 20.78 years (SD=1.94) respectively. Multivariate and univariate analysis of variance were used for the analysis of data; on variables such as: luck, political power, destiny and interpersonal relationships and locus of control.

The results were as follows: MANOVA results showed global differences statistically significant, according to the gender variable in self-concept scores. Thereafter, the use of ANOVA showed that male students had higher scores in internal locus of control than the female participants in luck and lower in destiny and in interpersonal relationships. It was further noted that in the scale of political power, there was no significant gender differences.

Moreover, women showed higher level of scores in external locus of control in destiny and interpersonal relationship. Men were observed to have higher scores of external locus of control in luck. Both aspects have been confirmed by similar research investigation (Garcia et al. 2017). Another interesting study was carried out among Nursing College students' locus of control and their being ready to engage in self-directed learning (Arkan, Ardal & Sari, 2016). There were 171 volunteer participants from a population of 3,348 first to fourth-year students. The sample was duly administered the Locus of Control Scale and Self-Directed-Learning Skills Scale. The data was analysed by using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, as well as two independent sample t-test. The results observed indicated that, students who were internally oriented were much better than their counterparts, who were externally oriented.

In Kenya, Aomo, Aloka and Raburu (2015) carried out an investigation, which aimed at determining a relationship between locus of control and Secondary School students' behaviour problem as experienced in Kenya. The target population was 11,479 form three students selected from the Kisii County. The Locus of Control Scale and Indulgence in Behavioural Problems Questionnaire were administered to the participants. One way analysis of variance was employed for data analysis. The results observed were that, there was a significant difference in students' indulgence in behavioural scores for the three locus of control. The groups comprised external, internal and intermediate locus of control. Students with external locus of control were identified, as experiencing most behavioural problems at School; Compared to other two groups. With internal locus of control students less behavioural problems were experienced. In Ethiopia, Abay, Blalock and Berhane (2017) examined the implication of farmers' locus of control on their technology adoption decisions. The results indicated that the locus of control is a good predictor of farmers' technology of adoption decisions; which is inclusive of use of chemical fertilisers, improved seeds and irrigation. It was concluded that farmers who have internal locus of control have the propensity to adopt agricultural technology.

Method

Participants in this study were randomly drawn from two undergraduate classes of second year students in the Department of Psychology, University of Nairobi. One class of students attended their lessons during the day while the others took their lessons in the evening. Each of the classes had approximately 150 students.

Sample

The sample size comprised 127 females and 97 males, giving a total of 224 university students. Their age ranged from 20 to 55 years. The participants were all taking psychology as a major subject.

Test Instrument

A questionnaire comprising 25 pairs of statements was used. Each statement had two options for participants to respond to as normally provided for in the Rotter's Locus of Control Scale. Participants were asked to circle whichever option they agreed with the most. They were also asked to indicate their age, gender and year of study at the university. Twenty minutes were allocated for the completion of the questionnaire, following which it was collected and counted for accuracy in the analysis.

Procedure

Two research assistants knowledgeable in the discipline of Psychology administered the Rotter's Locus of Control Scale to the participants. This was preceded by a briefing to the students by the principal researcher, on what the questionnaire/scale was all about and that responding to it was voluntary. No potential participants refrained from responding to the questionnaire.

Analysis of Data (Results)

Based on Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, there emerged both external and internal locus of control participants in uneven proportions. A chi-square statistical analysis was employed as displayed in Table 1. Calculation of: χ^2 test [2df, N224] = 107.6, $p < 0.001$; which was statistically significant. Thus confirming that, there was a mean significant difference between external internal locus control participants on their performance based on their locus of control. Specifically, externally oriented participants exceeded internally oriented participants

Table 1: University of Nairobi Students Performance in the Context of Locus of Control

Category	Scores	χ^2	P
External	172		
Internal	54	107.6	0.001

Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between Locus of Control and academic performance among University of Nairobi students who were pursuing a psychology course. The study was motivated by the need to find out the reason why some studies reported no relationship between locus of control and academic performance while others indicated that a relationship exists between the two. Further exploration indicated that the difference could be attributed to whether the focus was on internal or external locus of control in the context of academic performance. According to Manichandler (2014) and in the context of academic performance, students with an internal locus of control outperform their counterparts who have an external locus of control. In addition, a distinction is drawn between internally and externally locus controlled individuals by certain mediating and motivating factors as well as cognitive reactions. The argument is that a relationship between locus of control and academic performance exists when internal beliefs are associated with superior performance. Using a sample of 60 participants, Marthur (2014) explored the relationship between college students and their corresponding academic performance. The findings indicated that those who had a higher score in internality performed better than those who had a high score in externality. A similar study by Mkumbo and Amani (2012) among students at the University of Dares salaam observed that students attributed their academic performance to internal, stable and controllable factors; while failure was attributed to external and uncontrollable factors by those who were externally controlled. Ogolla, Aloka and Raburu (2016) assessed the relationship between locus of control and stress management among high school principals in Kenya. Both locus of control and stress management questionnaires were administered to a sample of 169 principals. The results showed that participants who had internal locus of control had a mean of 3.37 compared to a mean of 1.76 for those who had external locus of control. The mean difference was statistically significant in both locus of control and stress management among high school principals was therefore confirmed. Mujlatun and Ashal (2017) explored the performance of Bank employees in relation to their locus of control. From a sample of 65 participants, the results showed that their locus of control was a predictor of their good performance, especially those who had an internal locus of control. Khir, Redzuan et al. (2015) sought to determine the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement among 402 high school students. The results indicated that the majority of students had an external locus of control. A relationship between age and locus of control was also shown. The older one gets,

the more internally oriented they become. Those that were internally oriented were better in academic achievement. Those who had low achievement were externally oriented. In the current study and based on the Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, it was observed that both internal and external locus of control participants emerged but in uneven proportions. The employed chi square analysis was found to be statistically significant. Specifically though, externally-oriented participants exceeded those who were internally-oriented. Since locus of control is the extent to which people perceive outcomes as internally controllable by their own efforts and actions or as externally controlled by chance or outside forces, we might assume that participants in this study may have perceived that their academic performance was the result of luck, fate or powerful others.

Conclusion

The objective of this investigation was to establish the relationship between academic performance and locus of control among University of Nairobi students. The results indicated that externally-oriented participants exceeded internally-oriented participants. The impact of this finding is that those with an internal locus of control are better at tackling a wide range of challenges, such as university examinations compared to those with an external locus of control. In general, locus of control is closely related to achievement and success in life. Moreover, people who feel in control of a situation may experience a sense of empowerment. Furthermore, individuals with a high sense of mastery in academic work believe that they can control most aspects of their lives. On the other hand, those who are unable to gain mastery in academic performance or to exert influence over their circumstances may feel a sense of helplessness.

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