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Research Article

Adaptive Strategies

# Study of Locus of Control among Adolescents in Relation to their Gender and Locale

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This descriptive study examines the locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender and locale. The sample comprised 80 students (40 males and 40 females) drawn randomly from schools in the Amritsar district of Punjab state. The study employed the Hindi version of Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (1996). Descriptive statistics and t-test were used to analyze the data. Results indicated that gender and locale does not effect adolescent's locus of control. No significant difference exists in locus of control of male and female adolescents. Further, it is found that locale has no significant effect on locus of control. The study highlights implications for teachers in guiding adolescents to deal effectively with students exhibiting internal and external locus of control and develop adaptive strategies.

**Keywords:** locus of control, adaptive strategies, adolescents, gender, locale

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# 1. Introduction

Education is universally regarded as a vital instrument for individual empowerment, social transformation, and national development. It extends beyond formal classroom experiences and acts as a lifelong process through which individuals acquire knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values essential for meaningful participation in society (White, 2019). Education strengthens a nation's human capital, drives economic growth, promotes social harmony, and supports the functioning of democratic institutions (UNESCO, 2020). As societies modernize, education becomes increasingly critical in enabling individuals to adapt to complex technological, economic and social changes.

The academic and social landscape confronting today's adolescents has grown significantly more challenging. Rapid technological advancements, increased academic competition, heightened parental expectations, peer pressure, and pervasive social media exposure are contributing to unprecedented levels of stress among young people (Prajapati & Bharadwaj, 2021). Adolescence, a stage marked by rapid biological, emotional, and cognitive development, is particularly sensitive to these pressures. Young people often experience heightened psychological vulnerability as they attempt to navigate issues of identity, independence, academic achievement and social relationships. Among adolescents, chronic stress, anxiety, academic difficulties, withdrawal, irritability, depression and impaired decision-making are directly associated with their locus of control.

# 2. Locus of Control and Adolescent Development

Locus of control refers to individuals' generalized beliefs about the extent to which they can control outcomes in their lives. Originally conceptualized by Rotter (1966), it refers to the extent to which individuals believe that life outcomes are contingent on their own efforts, abilities and actions (internal control) or on external forces such as fate, luck, chance, or powerful external agents. Research suggests that adolescents with an internal locus of control demonstrate higher resilience, stronger coping mechanisms, lower anxiety, and greater problem-solving efficiency (Lefcourt, 1976; Powell & Vega, 1973).

Conversely, those with an external orientation often exhibit helplessness, dependency, avoidance, and difficulty adapting to stressful events (Phares, 1979; Zimbardo, 1985).

This psychological orientation significantly influences motivation, responsibility, and emotional adjustment. Adolescents with an internal locus of control often display higher self-confidence, perseverance, and proactive behavior (Lefcourt, 1976). Those with an external locus of control may experience helplessness, dependency, avoidance, and heightened stress.

Research consistently demonstrates that locus of control plays a crucial role in how individuals perceive stress and manage challenges. Internally oriented individuals approach stressors as manageable, exert effort to resolve problems, rely more on problem-focused coping, exhibit lower levels of anxiety and emotional distress (Powell & Vega, 1973; Phares, 1979). Contrary to this, externally oriented individuals perceive stressors as uncontrollable, show passivity or avoidance, experience greater emotional turmoil and demonstrate lower academic motivation (Zimbardo, 1985).

Thus, locus of control is closely linked to adolescents' stress responses, coping styles and overall psychological adaptation.

# 3. Review of Related Literature

Bernardi (1997) found that individuals with an internal locus of control perceived stress as a motivator for higher performance.

Rahim (1997) reported that managers with an internal locus of control were better suited for high-stress roles.

Lam and Schaubroeck (2000) studied locus of control in the context of promotions and found that employees with an internal locus of control maintained improved attitudes after promotion.

Schmitz, Neuman, and Oppermann (2000) reported that higher work-related stress was associated with poorer locus of control among German nurses.

Brown, Mulhern and Joseph (2002) found that firefighters with an external locus of control experienced higher psychological distress, particularly when exposed to stressful incidents.

Chou-Kang, Chi-Sheng, Chiek-Peng and Ching-Yun (2005) reported that locus of control moderated the relationship between job stress, job satisfaction and turnover intentions among hospital employees.

Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki and McNamara (2005) found that individuals with an internal locus of control developed better leader–member exchange relationships, contributing to favorable work-related outcomes.

Panuelis and Claxton (2008) found positive correlations among happiness, creative ideation and internal locus of control.

Breet, Myburgh and Poggenpoel (2010) demonstrated that adolescent boys with an external locus of control exhibited significantly higher aggression.

Bulus and Mustafa (2011) found that locus of control predicted goal orientations and academic achievement among prospective teachers.

Kauts and Mittu (2011) found that teacher effectiveness varied across different stress and locus of control levels, with highly stressed teachers showing better effectiveness.

Ahman, Mohammad and Raheela (2012) reported that teachers with an internal locus of control experienced lower levels of stress.

Zaidi and Moksin (2013) reported gender differences in locus of control among Pakistani undergraduate students, with men scoring higher on internal locus of control.

Arslan and Akin (2014) found that metacognition predicted academic locus of control, especially among students with an internal orientation.

Moreland, Felton, Hanson, Jackson and Dumas (2016) reported that increased parental internal locus of control improved child behavior over an eight-week program.

Qadri, Hassan and Sheikh (2017) demonstrated the mediating role of internal locus of control and job stress between spiritual intelligence and job performance.

Opiyo (2018) found that internal locus of control significantly influenced employees' perceptions of stress management effectiveness.

Sinha, Bhattacharya and Sharma (2019) found that individuals with an internal locus of control experienced lower job stress and higher job satisfaction.

Srivastava and Kapoor (2021) noted that locus of control significantly moderated the relationship between organizational role stress and psychological well-being.

Auliya, Zaharuddin and Darmayanti (2023) examined the influence of internal locus of control and academic self-efficacy on academic adjustment among students at the faculty of Psychology UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. Results showed that internal locus of control and academic self-efficacy significantly contributed to academic adjustment, suggesting that students with stronger internal control beliefs adapt better to academic demands and environmental pressures.

Jain and Lokesh (2023) conducted a study among Indian young adults and examined perceived parenting styles, locus of control and coping strategies. It found that parenting styles were related to individuals' locus of control and their choice of coping mechanisms- underscoring that locus of control development may be influenced by early environment and that control orientation affects coping behavior later.

Yiming, Shi, Alghadi, Kayani and Biasutti (2023) conducted a study on social support and self-efficacy as mediators between internal locus of control and adolescents' physical activity. The results displayed that physical activity is positively affected by locus of control, self-efficacy, and social support. Both self-efficacy and social support are positively associated with locus of control and physical activity. Further, locus of control also indirectly affects physical activity through self-efficacy and social support.

Qi, Lizelle and Villanueva (2024) conducted a study entitled "Locus of control and stress coping mechanisms: towards developing a psychological resilience program for athletes". Results showed that athletes attribute outcomes to factors like internal control, belief in powerful others, and chance. Self-assessment of their locus of control did not significantly vary based on factors like sex, age, sports division, or years of playing experience.

Thus, research supports the theoretical position that locus of control remains a key psychological variable in understanding adjustment, coping, and well-being among adolescents and young adults in diverse contexts. Adolescents with an internal locus of control are more likely to take responsibility for their actions, engage in effective coping, and maintain confidence in challenging situations.

Therefore, exploring the constructs like locus of control can provide valuable insights for educators, parents, counselors, and policymakers aiming to promote adolescent mental health. The findings will contribute to a better understanding of how psychological orientations influence coping abilities and will offer practical implications for designing and developing school-based interventions that foster healthy internal control, emotional stability, and adaptive functioning in young learners.

# 4. Objectives of the Study

1. To study locus of control among adolescents.
2. To study locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender.
3. To study locus of control among adolescents with respect to locale.

# 5. Hypotheses of the Study

1. There exists significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender.
2. There exists significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to locale.

# 6. Research Design

In the present study descriptive survey method was used.

# 7. Sample

A sample of 80 adolescents has been drawn randomly from different schools of Amritsar district. Equal numbers of boys and girls were included in the sample. Random sampling ensured representation across urban and rural areas.

# 8. Tools Used

Rotter's Locus of Control (1996).

# 9. Statistical Techniques Used

- Descriptive statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis worked out to see the nature of distribution of scores on locus of control.
- t-test to examine significant differences in mean scores across gender and locale.

# 10. Analysis and Interpretation of Data

**Hypothesis 1: There exists a significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender.**

This hypothesis was framed to find out difference in the mean scores of locus of control of male and female adolescents. The hypothesis has been tested by applying t-test to the mean scores of adolescent students with respect to gender and outcomes of the analysis have been reported in table 1.

**Table 1:** Mean Scores of Locus of Control among Adolescents with Respect to Gender

| Variable | Gender | N | Mean | SD | SEM | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Locus of Control | Male | 40 | 12.25 | 1.5648 | 0.2474 | 0.93 |
| | Female | 40 | 11.975 | 1.025 | 0.1621 | |

Table 1depicts the difference in the mean scores of locus of control of adolescent students with respect to gender. It is found that mean scores of male is 12.25 and female is 11.975. The calculated value of 't' is 0.93 which is insignificant at 0.05 level of confidence. This means that the mean difference is not significant. Hence, hypothesis 1 "There exists significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender" is not accepted.

**Interpretation:** No significant difference; hypothesis rejected.

Studies conducted by Zaidi and Moksin (2013) and Manichander (2019) confirmed this result. The reason may be that education helps the adolescents to identify their potential and fullfill their responsibility more efficiently and they learn to control and believe in themselves. So educational level and self-awareness may influence adolescents' locus of control more than gender.

**Hypothesis 2: There exists a significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to locale.**

This hypothesis was framed to find out difference in the mean scores of locus of control of adolescent students of urban and rural area. The hypothesis has been tested by applying 't'-test' to the mean scores of adolescents. The outcomes of the analysis have been reported in table 2.

**Table 2:** Mean Scores of Locus of Control among Adolescents with Respect to Locale

| Variable | Locale | N | Mean | SD | SEM | t-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Locus of Control | Urban | 40 | 12.325 | 1.5589 | 0.2465 | 1.448 |
| | Rural | 40 | 11.9 | 1.0077 | 0.1593 | |

Table 2 depicts the difference in the mean scores of locus of control of adolescent students with respect to locale. It is found that mean scores of both urban and rural area students are 12.325 and 11.9. The calculated value of t is 1.448 which is insignificant at 0.05 level of confidence. This means that the mean difference is not significant. Hence, hypothesis 2 "There exists significant difference in the mean scores of locus of control among adolescents with respect to locale" is not accepted.

**Interpretation:** No significant difference; hypothesis rejected.

Result is supported by Naik (2015) and Manichander (2019). The reason may be found out that due to globalization, rural and urban area gaps have been diminished and now rural areas too have a good education system, healthcare and income facilities. So similarity in culture, education and socioeconomic factors may account for this result.

# 11. Findings and Conclusions

1. Locus of Control by Gender
   - Mean scores: Male = 12.25, Female = 11.975
   - Standard deviation: Male = 1.5648, Female = 1.025
   - Conclusion: No significant difference exists in locus of control of male and female adolescents.

2. Locus of Control by Locale
   - Mean scores: Urban = 12.325, Rural = 11.9
   - Standard deviation: Urban = 1.5589, Rural = 1.0077
   - Conclusion: No significant difference exists in locus of control between urban and rural adolescents.Locale has no significant effect on locus of control.

**Suggestions for Further Research**

- As the study was confined to Amritsar city only and the results cannot be generalized to other regions. So similar studies in other cities can be conducted for broader generalizability.
- Study was limited to 80 students; larger samples may provide more reliable outcomes. So sample size and geographical area can be expanded to enhance reliability of findings.
- Only adolescents of Ninth and Tenth Grade were included; lower and higher classes were not studied. Students from lower and higher grades can be included to understand developmental differences.
- Study can be replicated among college or university students.
- Research can be extended to students of professional courses (e.g., B.Tech, M.Tech, B.Ed, M.Ed, GNM).

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