

## The Relationship Between Locus of Control and Happiness in Young Adults

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### ABSTRACT

The current study attempted to investigate the relationship between Locus of control and happiness through determining Locus of Control Orientation (Internal or External) and measuring the rate of happiness. Rotter's 29 item Locus of Control scale was used to measure the locus of control orientation and 29 item Oxford Happiness Questionnaire was used to measure happiness of the participants. A sample of 62 participants, male and female, aged 18-25years old (young adults), was randomly selected for the study. The IBM software programme Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows was used to manage and score the data. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to test for a linear relationship between the two variables.

**Keywords:** *Locus of Control, Happiness, Subjective Wellbeing*

Now a days the concept of happiness and its impact on an individual's life has been highlighted in various studies. Along with that, one's locus of control orientation (internal or external) could play a significant role in determining how one copes with stress and to increase the motivation to take charge of one's own life. If people believe that they have control over their fate, they are more likely to take action to improve their situation, when necessary, which in turn could lead to greater happiness. In today's modern and competitive world everyone faces anxiety and their goal is to obtain happiness. In this study effort has been made to understand whether Locus of control and its sub dimensions (Internal locus of control and external locus of control) correlate to happiness.

### **Locus of control**

The concept of Locus of Control was developed by Julian B. Rotter in the 1960s, and has since then become an aspect of personality psychology. Julian Rotter (1966, 1978, 1981, 1990) devised a theory based on a basic principle of motivation derived from Thorndike's law of effect: People are motivated to seek reinforcement and avoid punishment. Locus of control refers to the belief that an individual's actions will or will not have an effect on what happens. Locus of control is a personality attribute reflecting the degree to which a person

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generally perceives events to be under his/her control (internal locus) or under the control of powerful others (external locus) (Rotter 1966, 1990, 1992).

Rotter's research focuses on the content of two generalised expectancies— internal and external control of reinforcement, which can be described as the tendency for people to assume that they either have control or do not have control over events and consequences in their lives.

People who assume that their own actions and decisions directly affect the consequences they experience are said to be internal in locus of control, whereas people who assume that their lives are more controlled by powerful others, luck, or fate are external in locus of control (MacDonald, 1970; Rotter, 1966). Rotter associated people high in internal locus of control with the personality characteristics of high achievement motivation (the will to succeed in any attempted task). Those who give up too quickly or who attribute events in their lives to external causes can fall into patterns of learned helplessness and depression (Abramson et al., 1978, 1980; GongGuy & Hammen, 1980). However, Rotter (1975) cautioned that internality and externality represent two ends of a continuum, not an either/or typology.

Locus of control is an individual's perception of his or her ability to control the outcomes of events. It is conceptualized as residing on a dynamic bi-polar continuum ranging from internal to external, and represents the tendency to attribute success and difficulties either to internal factors such as effort or to external factors such as chance. If individuals tend to perceive that reinforcement results from their own behaviour, they are considered to possess internal locus of control. If Individuals tend to view fate, luck, or powerful others as being responsible for reinforcements, rather than their own behaviour, they possess external locus of control (Rockstraw,2006).

### *Happiness*

Several research groups endeavour to answer the question of what happiness is and what the correlates of happiness are using the scientific method. Happiness is generally defined in terms of the average level of satisfaction over a specific time period, the frequency and degree of positive affect manifestations and the relative absence of negative affect (Argyle et al., 1989).

Joy, satisfaction, contentment, and fulfilment are all feelings associated with happiness. While there are many different definitions of happiness, it is frequently described as involving positive emotions and a sense of satisfaction in one's life. When most people talk about happiness, they may be referring to how they feel right now or to a broader sense of how they feel about life in general.

Three major types of happiness are high life satisfaction, frequent positive feelings, and infrequent negative feelings (Diener, 1984). Because happiness is such a broad concept, psychologists and other social scientists often label emotional state and its various forms as "subjective well-being." Wellbeing could be understood as the qualities of a good life or a good society. Subjective well-being, as the name implies, is concerned with an individual's overall personal feelings about their present life. Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as 'a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life' (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2002, p. 63).

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The subjective approach emphasises subjective wellbeing, that is people's own evaluations of their lives, especially their life satisfaction (a cognitive evaluation), happiness (a positive emotional state) and unhappiness (a negative emotional state). A person who has a high level of satisfaction with their life and who has greater positive affect and less or less negative affect would be considered to have high levels of SWB [or, more simply, be very happy].

### *Statement of Problem:*

To study the relationship between Locus of Control and Happiness

### *Objective of the Study*

- The principal aim of this study was to analyse the relationship between locus of control and happiness.
- To study Locus of control (internality and externality) and happiness among participants (between the age group 18-25) and their correlation.

### *Hypothesis*

- There is no relationship between Locus of Control and Happiness.
- External locus of Control is negatively correlated with Happiness.

### *Sample*

A sample of 62 participants, male and female, aged 18-25years old, was randomly selected for the study. Out of that sample 46 were female, 14 were male and 2 preferred not to reveal their gender.

### *Variables*

Following variables were studied in the present study

- Variable 1: Locus of Control
- Variable 2: Happiness

### *Tools*

The following scales were used to collect data:

- **Rotter's Locus of Control scale:** The Locus of Control Scale (LCS) was [published in 1966 by Julian B. Rotter. It is a 29-item questionnaire that measures an individual's level of internal-external control, in other words, the degree to which the individual interprets events as being a result of their own actions or external factors. The Locus of control scale is a forced choice questionnaire in that respondents must select a response choice that provides a specific answer to each item. For each item, the respondent must select the statement they agree with the most from an 'a' or 'b' option. The 29-item version contains 6 filler questions intended to make the purpose of the test somewhat more ambiguous. Scores range from high internal locus of control (0-5) to a high external locus of control (19-23) (Rotter, 1966; 1975). The LCS is widely used and has been translated into over 40 languages. It is a self-report or interviewer administered test, which requires approximately 5-10 minutes to solve. The intended population for this scale is adults. However, modified version of the test could be used for younger ages.
- **Oxford happiness questionnaire:** Data collection was performed by using Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (Hills & Argyle, 2002), to measure general psychological causes of happiness. Oxford Happiness Questionnaire consists of a 29-item measure

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of happiness that utilizes a six-point rating scale of agreement (6-point Likert scale) ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). Scoring range of this questionnaire is from 29 to 174. Scoring is interpreted as higher the score, greater the happiness. This instrument is compact (each item is presented as a single statement), easy to administer, and allows endorsement over an extended range (Hills & Argyle, 2002).

### Reliability and Validity:

- Cronbach's alpha = .91.
- Demonstrates construct validity by correlation with measures of self-esteem, life regard index and depression-happiness scale (.81, .77, .90)

### Statistical Analysis

The data were managed and scored using IBM software program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows. Data were entered into the computer and normal distribution for both the variables (External Locus of Control and Happiness) was observed. Means and standard deviations for all variables were computed. Statistical operation of Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to test for linear relationship between the two variables.

## RESULTS

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Locus of control and Happiness*

VARIABLE	MEAN	STD. DEVIATION	N
External Locus of Control	11.26	3.589	62
Happiness	126.16	20.275	62

Mean and Standard deviation for the variables, external locus of control and happiness, are presented in **table 1**. For external locus of control, the mean is 11.26 and its standard deviation is 3.58. For the second variable i.e., Happiness, mean was calculated to be 126.16 and its standard deviation as 20.275. The total number of samples for this study, represented by N, was sixty-two.

*Table 2 Correlation Between LOC and Happiness*

		LOC	Happiness Total
LOC	Pearson Correlation	1	-.360**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.004
	N	62	62
Happiness Total	Pearson Correlation	-.360**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	
	N	62	62

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation between the two variables; external locus of control and happiness is shown in **Table 2**. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to test for linear relationship between the two variables. It is seen that the correlation is significant at 0.01 level (i.e., 99 % confidence and 1% chance), which means that the correlation is highly significant and therefore it is likely that there is a relationship between external locus of control and happiness in the population as well as the sample. As a result, the null hypothesis that there is no correlation between the two variables was found to be not true. A negative correlation between external locus of control and happiness was found in this research. Hence the

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hypothesis that 'External Locus of Control is negatively correlated with Happiness' is supported.

### DISCUSSION

The current study explored the links between Locus of control and happiness. The main purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between external locus of control and happiness or subjective wellbeing. A negative correlation between the two variables (external locus of control and happiness) was found. Hence the hypothesis was supported. As the relationship between the two variables was highly significant the results were generalisable to the population.

The present study has proved the negative relationship between the variables, external locus of control and happiness. The results suggest that higher the tendency towards externality, less is the happiness. According to the same logic used above, it is plausible that people are less likely to be unhappy when they believe they have control over their lives. It's reasonable to assume that this belief motivates them to deal with stressful situations head on, preventing them from thinking negatively about themselves, the world, and the future, as well as feeling helpless and becoming passive and indecisive. Events and challenges that are common in everyday life can become opportunities for personal growth for people with a high internal locus of control.

However, as the results suggest that individuals who display external locus of control are more likely to be unhappy, it would mean that when people believe that they are in less control over events in their lives they are more likely to be unhappy. This could have negative implications on people's success, future employment, future relationships, and overall happiness. When addressing people's subjective well-being, it's important to consider locus of control as one of the significant variables. More research is needed to determine how to effectively address locus of control in order to increase people's subjective wellbeing and satisfaction, as well as the happiness that comes with it.

### CONCLUSION

- The findings highlight the significant negative relationship that exists between the two variables.
- The results suggest that individuals who display external locus of control are more likely to be unhappy.

#### *Limitations*

- The sample size was small.
- Although the age group for the present was 18-25, fifty percent of the responses came from 20 years old young adults.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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