

The Influence of Locus of Control on Personality Traits Among College Students

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ABSTRACT

The present study explored the influence of locus of control on college students' personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism). A total of 142 students from Kolhapur district participated, categorized into two groups based on their locus of control: internal and external. The study utilized two primary measures: the NEO Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) to assess personality traits and Rotter's Locus of Control Scale to evaluate control orientation. Statistical analysis, including means, standard deviations, and independent samples t-tests, revealed significant differences between the two groups across all personality traits. Students with an external locus of control scored higher on Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, and Agreeableness, while those with an internal locus of control exhibited higher levels of Neuroticism. These findings contribute to understanding how locus of control may influence personality dynamics among college students and suggest potential pathways for improving academic performance and psychological well-being through interventions targeting locus of control.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Personality Traits, College Students, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Openness*

Locus of control has been a central construct in psychological research, reflecting an individual's belief system regarding how much they can control events in their lives (Rotter, 1966). Individuals with an *internal locus of control* tend to attribute outcomes to their actions and abilities, while those with an *external locus of control* attribute events to external factors, such as luck, fate, or powerful others. College students, a population navigating significant developmental and educational challenges, are influenced by their locus of control, shaping their academic achievements, stress management, and interpersonal relationships.

Personality traits, as defined by the Big Five framework openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism offer a comprehensive understanding of individual differences (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Research has consistently demonstrated that locus of control interacts with personality traits to influence behavior, decision-making, and coping mechanisms. However, the extent and nature of these interactions, particularly among college students, remain an area of active exploration.

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The present study aimed to bridge this gap by examining the relationship between locus of control and personality traits in a sample of college students. By focusing on this relationship, the study contributes to understanding how control beliefs shape personality dynamics, which may inform interventions to foster psychological well-being and academic success.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The concept of locus of control was first introduced by Rotter (1966) in the context of social learning theory. Research has since highlighted its significance in various psychological and educational outcomes. For instance, Lefcourt (1976) identified that individuals with an internal locus of control demonstrated higher motivation and academic achievement than those with an external locus of control. Similarly, studies have suggested that an internal locus of control correlates positively with self-efficacy and problem-focused coping strategies (Cheng et al., 2013). These findings underscore the role of locus of control as a critical psychological construct influencing individual behavior and outcomes.

Personality traits, as encapsulated by the Big Five model, have been extensively studied about locus of control. Roberts et al. (2006) found that internal locus of control was positively associated with traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability, while external locus of control was linked to higher levels of neuroticism. These associations suggest that individuals with internal control beliefs are more likely to exhibit goal-oriented and emotionally resilient behaviors. In contrast, those with external control beliefs may experience heightened emotional instability and stress.

The relationship between locus of control and personality traits has gained significant attention among college students due to its implications for academic performance and psychological health. Research by Nowicki and Duke (2016) indicated that students with an internal locus of control were likelier to engage in proactive learning strategies and exhibit higher levels of openness to experience and extraversion. In contrast, those with an external locus of control were more prone to feelings of helplessness, reduced agreeableness, and increased vulnerability to stress. These findings highlight the importance of fostering an internal locus of control to enhance students' academic and personal growth.

Studies have also examined the mediating role of locus of control in the relationship between personality traits and life outcomes. For example, Judge et al. (2002) demonstrated that conscientiousness and openness predicted career success more strongly among individuals with an internal locus of control. This indicates that locus of control interacts with personality traits and amplifies their impact on critical life domains.

Despite the wealth of research, gaps remain in understanding the locus of control-personality trait relationship within specific populations. Given their unique developmental stage and academic challenges, college students represent a crucial group for further investigation. Previous studies have often focused on Western populations, allowing cross-cultural research to explore how socio-cultural factors influence these dynamics. Additionally, while much research has examined general correlations, fewer studies have investigated these relationships' causal mechanisms.

Existing literature underscores the significant interplay between locus of control and personality traits. Individuals' beliefs about control influence their personality expression, behavior, and psychological outcomes. However, further research is needed to deepen our

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understanding of this relationship among diverse populations, particularly college students, who are navigating critical developmental milestones. The current study aimed to address these gaps by investigating how locus of control correlates with personality traits in a sample of college students, offering insights into potential interventions to enhance their well-being and academic success.

Objective of the study

To examine the influence of locus of control on personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, And Neuroticism) among college students.

Hypothesis

There will be no significant difference between internal and external locus of control on Personality traits (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism).

METHODS

Sample

The study selected 142 participants from the Kolhapur district, considering factors such as socio-economic status, age group, and educational level. Initially, the Locus of Control Scale was administered as a screening tool to assess participants' locus of control and categorize them as having either internal or external locus of control. Based on the screening results, 100 participants were selected, comprising 50 students with an internal locus of control and 50 with an external locus of control. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 24 years ($M = 20.31$, $SD = 3.48$). Non-probability accidental sampling and purposive sampling methods were utilized for participant recruitment.

Research Tools

- 1. Personality Test (NEOPI):** The test created by Costa and McCrae measures five personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. It includes 90 items with five response options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Internal consistency scores for the traits are as follows: Neuroticism (N) = 0.79, Extraversion (E) = 0.79, Openness (O) = 0.80, Agreeableness (A) = 0.75, and Conscientiousness (C) = 0.83. The test also correlates with the Self-Directed Search by John L. Holland, with notable correlations: Artistic with Aesthetic (0.56), Investigative with Ideas (0.43), and Social with Tender-mindedness (0.36).
- 2. Rotter's locus of control scale:** The Locus of Control Scale, standardized by Anand Kumar and Srivastava in 1985, comprises 29 pairs of items. Out of these, 23 items are scored, while 6 filler items are not scored. Scoring is conducted using a specific key, where a higher score indicates a greater tendency towards external locus of control (external LOC), and lower scores reflect internal locus of control (internal LOC). The authors report a reliability coefficient of 0.88 for the scale, which is considered significantly high.

Variable

Independent variable- 1) Locus of Control a) Internal b) External

Dependent Variable - 1) Openness 2) Conscientiousness 3) Extraversion
4) Agreeableness 5) Neuroticism

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

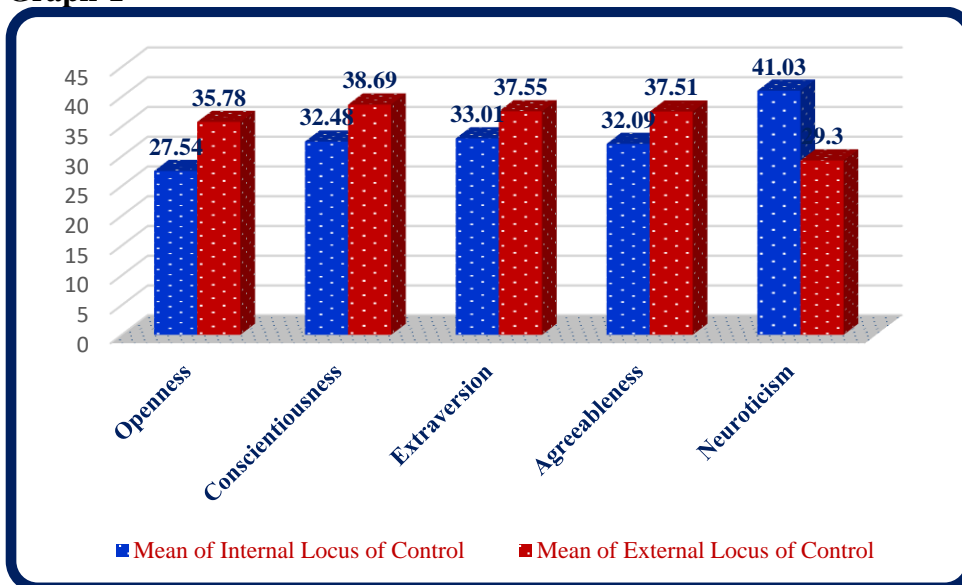
Mean, standard deviation, and *t* value of internal and external locus of control for college students of Personality Traits.

Table No-1

Personality Traits	Internal Locus of Control		External Locus of Control		df	't' Value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Openness	27.54	4.15	35.78	3.74	98	10.42**
Conscientiousness	32.48	3.50	38.69	4.02	98	8.23**
Extraversion	33.01	4.16	37.55	3.03	98	6.23**
Agreeableness	32.09	4.10	37.51	4.18	98	6.54**
Neuroticism	41.03	3.61	29.30	3.76	98	15.91**

Significant at 0.01** = 2.62, 0.05* = 1.98

Graph-1



The present study investigated the influence of locus of control (internal and external) on personality traits among college students. Table 1 provides the descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and the independent samples *t*-test results for five personality traits: openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

Openness - Students with an external locus of control had a significantly higher mean score on openness ($M = 35.78, SD = 3.74$) compared to those with an internal locus of control ($M = 27.54, SD = 4.15$), $t(98) = 10.42, p < .01$. This result suggests that students with an external locus of control tend to exhibit greater openness to new experiences, creativity, and adaptability. This finding aligns with previous research indicating that transparency may be more pronounced among individuals who rely on external influences for exploration and novelty (McCrae & Costa, 1997).

Conscientiousness - A significant difference was also observed for conscientiousness, with external locus of control students ($M = 38.69, SD = 4.02$) scoring higher than their internal locus of control counterparts ($M = 32.48, SD = 3.50$), $t(98) = 8.23, p < .01$. Conscientiousness,

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characterized by organization, responsibility, and self-discipline, appears to be stronger among students who perceive external factors as guiding their outcomes.

Extraversion - Students with an external locus of control also scored significantly higher in extraversion ($M = 37.55$, $SD = 3.03$) compared to those with an internal locus of control ($M = 33.01$, $SD = 4.16$), $t(98) = 6.23$, $p < .01$. Extraversion, defined by sociability, energy, and assertiveness, may be enhanced in individuals who depend on external stimuli for engagement.

Agreeableness - Agreeableness scores were significantly higher among external locus of control students ($M = 37.51$, $SD = 4.18$) than those with an internal locus of control ($M = 32.09$, $SD = 4.10$), $t(98) = 6.54$, $p < .01$. Agreeableness reflects traits such as cooperation, trust, and compassion. This finding indicates that students with an external locus of control may exhibit greater prosocial behavior, possibly due to a stronger reliance on external social connections.

Neuroticism - Interestingly, neuroticism was significantly higher among students with an internal locus of control ($M = 41.03$, $SD = 3.61$) than those with an external locus of control ($M = 29.30$, $SD = 3.76$), $t(98) = 15.91$, $p < .01$. Neuroticism, associated with emotional instability, anxiety, and mood fluctuations, appears to be more prevalent among internally oriented individuals.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The external locus of control senior college students had significantly higher Openness than the internal locus of control senior college students.
2. External locus of control senior college students had significantly higher Conscientiousness than the internal locus of control senior college students.
3. External locus of control senior college students had significantly higher Extraversion than the internal locus of control senior college students.
4. The External locus of control senior college students were significantly more Agreeable than the internal locus of control senior college students.
5. The internal locus of control senior college students had significantly higher Neuroticism than the external locus of control senior college students.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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