

Research Paper

Personality and Locus of Control among Individuals Diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship and differences between personality (Big 5 personality traits) and locus of control in individuals diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. They are characterized by emotional instability, impulsivity and interpersonal problems. There have been several studies on the variables distinctly, but the interplay of the variables in this particular population have not been studied effectively. A sample of 60 participants were selected from different psychiatric hospitals in Kerala, Chethana Centre for Neuropsychiatry, Malaparamba and ST. Vincent hospital, Thuvayoor, who were split equally, with 30 from bipolar group and 30 from borderline group. Standardized tests were used for the study- John, Donahue and Kentles Big Five Inventory (BFI,1991) and Locus of Control scale by Sony & Sananda Raj (1997). Simple random sampling was utilized in the study. Pearson correlation and independent sample T-test were employed. Results revealed that there is a significant relationship between the variables openness and external LOC, conscientiousness and internal LOC, conscientiousness and external LOC, extraversion and internal LOC, agreeableness and external LOC and neuroticism and internal LOC and there is a significant difference between the variables conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, internal LOC and external LOC where individuals diagnosed with bipolar scoring higher than borderline.

Keywords: *Personality, Locus of Control, Bipolar Affective Disorder, Borderline Personality Disorder*

Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder are severe psychiatric conditions which are marked by emotional dysregulation, inter-personal problems and impulsivity. While both disorders share overlapping symptoms, their underlying psychological traits haven't been studied much- particularly in comparative studies. Personality traits such as neuroticism and impulsivity, and Locus of Control- which determines the type of control an individual has in one's life are critical, yet understudied factors in this particular population. This study aims to investigate the differences and relationships in personality and locus of control in individuals diagnosed with Bipolar

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Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder and thereby filling the gap in the literature and also offering novel insights for targeted interventions.

The Big Five Personality model (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and Neuroticism) provides a vigorous structure for understanding trait-based susceptibilities in psychiatric disorders. For example, elevated neuroticism is often linked to emotional instability in both bipolar and borderline individuals. Likewise, Locus of Control- a concept rooted in Social Learning Theory has significance in mental health outcomes. Individuals with an external locus of control (attribution to external forces) tends to exhibit heightened emotional reactivity and helplessness, whereas individuals with an internal locus of control (attribution to internal forces) tends to exhibit resilience.

Previous researches highlight Personality and Locus of Control as independent foretellers of mental health outcomes. Costa and McCrae founded neuroticism as a multi-diagnostic risk factor for affective instability, while Rotter highlighted locus of controls role in coping behaviours. In Borderline Personality Disorder, Leib et al. associated external locus of control to emotional lability, when in fact Muhtadiel et al. recorded mood dependent locus of control shifts in bipolar affective disorder. However, these studies overlook the interplay between personality and locus of control. By merging these constructs, in this study the results are put together in a way that shows how they work together.

By identifying disorder specific interplay, it could help develop personalized treatments and interventions for the particular population. And by clarifying this relationship, it will deepen the understanding of trait-level factors and cognitive biases which both contributes to the disorder.

Building upon this, the study seeks to mark a critical gap by directly comparing how personality and locus of control jointly contribute to emotional dysregulation in Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. This research helps in developing treatments, which is beyond just theory. By understanding the psychological differences between bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder in the per se variables, better interventions can be developed.

Regardless of the shared symptoms of bipolar and borderline category, it is important to know that they come from different psychological and developmental backgrounds (Goodwin & Jamison, 2007; Linehan, 1993). For example, individuals with bipolar disorder experience mood changes in cycles or episodes while individuals with borderline experience mood swings almost all the time and is caused by external factors (Paris,2007). These differences can turn up in how people perceive themselves, their personality traits and how much control they feel they have on their life. Hence, by comparing both these traits it helps in better understanding of their differences and may lead to better diagnosis and treatment.

A significant model which explains how mental health issues develop is the Diathesis-Stress model. It put forth that life stressors combined with personality or locus of control may trigger problems (Ingram & Luxton, 2005). For instance, those who believe they have little control over their life and if they are highly neurotic, they may struggle with stress which may lead to difficulty in dealing with emotions. Since, both bipolar and borderline are strongly affected by stress (Ritter et al., 2012), looking at the interaction between their traits and beliefs can help us better understand how these disorders start and develop.

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Moreover, the importance of focusing on personality traits in treatments are suggested by the recent advances in therapy. For example, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT) is often used for people diagnosed with borderline personality disorder which helps them in managing emotions and building a sense of control, both related to locus of control (Linehan, 1993). Furthermore, cognitive behavioral techniques are used for the treatment of bipolar affective disorder which helps in detrimental thought patterns and personality characteristics (Miklowitz, 2008). Thus, by understanding how personality and locus of control differ in these disorders, this study contributes to more effective therapy approaches. Studies look at personality and locus of control as separate factors, but they may actually influence each other. Research reveals that people who are more conscientious or outgoing tend to develop an internal control over time (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Conversely, an external locus of control tends to increase feelings of neuroticism by making people feel less in control of themselves and thereby increasing stress (Benassi, Sweeney, & Dufour, 1988). Thereupon, studying these two together can give a more profound and pragmatic understanding of how people operate in mental health states.

This study fills a primary gap in mental health research by looking past just symptoms. By focusing on personality traits and locus of control, it focuses to brace more personalized and definitive ways of comprehending and treating mental health conditions.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

- To find if there is a difference in personality traits of individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.
- To find if there is a difference in locus of control of individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.
- To find the inter-relationship between personality and locus of control of individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.

Hypotheses

- H0: There will be no significant difference in personality traits in individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.
- H0: There will be no significant difference in locus of control traits in individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.
- H0: There will be no significant relationship between personality and locus of control in individuals with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder.

Sample

A total of 60 individuals (30 from bipolar affective disorder and 30 from borderline personality disorder) who are clinically diagnosed were selected from different hospitals in Kerala - Leela hospital, Narimattom, Chethana Centre for Neuropsychiatry, Malaparamba and ST. Vincent hospital, Thuvayoor. Simple random sampling was utilized as the sampling method.

Instruments Used

1. **Big Five Inventory (BFI):** John, Donahue and Kentle created the Big Five Inventory (BFI) in 1991. It is based on the five-factor model of personality, which was proposed by Raymond Cattell in the 1940s. The big five factors are measured by

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44 items in total. Participants have to rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree. Previous research has evaluated the reliability of the BFI as .44, and the α coefficients for each dimension are about 0.8 (24). BFI scale scoring (“R” denotes reverse-scored items): Extraversion: 1, 6R, 11, 16, 21R, 26, 31R, 36, Agreeableness: 2R, 7, 12R, 17, 22, 27R, 32, 37R, 42, Conscientiousness: 3, 8R, 13, 18R, 23R, 28, 33, 38, 43R, Neuroticism: 4, 9R, 14, 19, 24R, 29, 34R, 39 and Openness: 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35R, 40, 41R, 44.

- 2. Locus of Control Scale:** The scale (Sony & Sananda Raj, 1997) was designed to measure the locus of control. The reliability of the test was determined using Split Half reliability method. A correlation between the two halves was found using Pearson-Product Moment formula half test reliability was found to be 0.64 (N=30). The reliability of the whole test was estimated using Spearman-Brown formula and which was found to be 0.78. The test has high reliability. To find the validity of the Locus of Control Scale, it was correlated with an external criterion: I.E Scale (a revised scale adapted scale of (Rotter & Valecha, 1980). For this the scale was administered to the fresh sample of 31 college students. The correlation found using Pearson-Product Moment formula was found to be 0.76 (which is significant at .01 Percent level). This shows the test has concurrent validity. It consists of five responses for each item, Strongly agree (A), Agree (B), Un-decided (C), Disagree (D) and Strongly disagree (E). The item representing internal dimensions were considered as positive and those which represent external dimensions as negative. For a positive item a weight age of 5, 4, 3, 2, or 1 given for the responses A, B, C, D AND E respectively., while for negative items the weight age was reversed as 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 respectively.

Procedure

The participants selected for the study included individuals diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. Permissions were obtained from 3 hospitals (Chethana Centre for Neuropsychiatry, Malaparamba and ST. Vincent hospital, Thuvayoor), where the researcher went for data collection. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their consent was taken. The participation was entirely voluntary and they were allowed to decline from further participating if they wished so. The participants were assured that the information would be kept confidential and would only be used for research purpose. For some participants who were unable to mark their responses, the researcher recorded their answers as they were verbally provided and the researcher cleared the doubts of the participants if necessary. The data was analysed using SPSS exploring differences and relationships between given variables.

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RESULTS

Table 1: Variables, Mean, SD, T-value and p-value among individuals diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder

Descriptive Statistics	Internal	External	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism
N	60	60	60	60	60	60	60
Mean	3.76000	30.8000	24.5833	33.0500	5.57000	30.2667	5.95000
Median	3.79000	32.0000	26.0000	33.0000	5.65000	30.5000	6.0800
Mode	3.78000	33.0000	28.0000	32.0000	5.65000	35.0000	6.43000
Standard Deviation	5.46287	7.14689	5.85790	3.48082	4.79406	5.54142	4.82859
Skewness	0.00	0.305	-0.457	-0.393	0.00	-0.606	0.00
Kurtosis	0.00	0.057	-0.157	0.311	0.00	0.095	0.00

Table 1 indicates the Descriptive statistics of Personality Traits and Locus of Control of individuals diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. The descriptive statistics indicate that most variables exhibit relatively symmetric distributions, as reflected in the close alignment between the mean, median, and mode values. Skewness and kurtosis values are generally within acceptable ranges, though slight negative skewness is observed in openness (-0.457) and agreeableness (-0.606), suggesting a mild concentration of higher scores. External locus of control shows the highest variability, as indicated by its standard deviation (7.14689). However, the Shapiro-Wilk test for normality revealed that the data was not normally distributed. Despite this, parametric tests were conducted, considering the similarity between the mean, median, and mode, as well as the robustness of parametric methods to deviations from normality, particularly with a sample size of 60 per group.

Table 2: Variables, Mean, SD, T-value and p-value among individuals diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder

Variables	Bipolar Affective Disorder		Borderline Personality Disorder		T value	P
	M	SD	M	SD		
Openness	23.4333	5.38634	27.7333	6.16963	-1.538	.129
Conscientiousness	34.9333	3.31073	31.1667	2.52003	4.959	.000**
Extraversion	32.9333	3.99943	29.0667	4.79895	3.390	.001***
Agreeableness	30.9333	5.99962	29.6000	5.05555	.931	.356
Neuroticism	38.2667	5.03048	34.1333	3.64581	3.644	.001***
Internal LOC	43.1667	3.92238	39.3000	6.13160	2.910	.005*
External LOC	33.7000	4.66942	27.9000	8.04449	3.415	.001***

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Table 2 presents the scores for Personality Traits and Locus of Control among individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. For Openness, the mean score of individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder was 23.43 (SD = 5.39), while the mean score for individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder was 25.73 (SD = 6.17). The t-value of -1.538 indicates no significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.130$), suggesting that both groups demonstrate similar levels of openness. For Conscientiousness, individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder scored a mean of 34.93 (SD = 3.31), while those with Borderline Personality Disorder scored a mean of 31.17 (SD = 2.52). The t-value of 4.959, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, shows a statistically significant difference. For Extraversion, the average score for the Bipolar Affective Disorder was 32.93 (SD = 3.99) and for the Borderline Personality Disorder was 29.07 (SD = 4.80). The calculated t-value of 3.866 ($p = 0.001$) indicates that there is a significant difference. For Agreeableness, the mean score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 30.93 (SD = 5.99), whereas for Borderline Personality Disorder it was 29.60 (SD = 5.06). The t-value of 0.935 and p-value of 0.356, however, suggest that this difference is not statistically significant. For Neuroticism, the mean score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 38.27 (SD = 5.03), whereas for Borderline Personality Disorder it was 34.13 (SD = 3.65). The t-value of 4.133 ($p < 0.001$) shows a significant difference. For Internal Locus of Control, the score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 43.17 (SD = 3.92), while people with Borderline Personality Disorder yielded 39.30 (SD = 6.13). The t-value of 2.910 ($p = 0.005$) indicates a significant difference. For Internal Locus of Control, the score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 43.17 (SD = 3.92), while people with Borderline Personality Disorder yielded 39.30 (SD = 6.13). The t-value of 2.910 ($p = 0.005$) indicates a significant difference. For External Locus of Control, patients with Bipolar Affective Disorder scored a mean of 33.70 (SD = 4.67), whereas patients with Borderline Personality Disorder scored a mean of 27.90 (SD = 8.04). The t-value of 3.415 ($p = 0.001$) shows a statistically significant difference.

Table 3: The correlation of the variables Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, External LOC and Internal LOC among individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and bipolar affective disorder

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Openness	-					
2. Conscientiousness	.012	-				
3. Extraversion	.409**	.586**	-			
4. Agreeableness	-.427**	.020	-.355**	-		
5. Neuroticism	-.194	.487**	.365**	.365**	-	
6. Internal LOC	.122	.277*	.465**	.188	.408**	-
7. External LOC	-.439**	.304*	-.131	.326*	.116	-.117

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

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

In table 3, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis is used to understand the significant relationship between the variables. The correlation coefficient value for Openness and Internal Locus of Control is .122, while for Openness and External Locus of Control, it is -.439. The correlation coefficient value for Conscientiousness and Internal Locus of Control is .277, and for Conscientiousness and External Locus of Control, it is .304. For Extraversion and Internal Locus of Control, the correlation coefficient value is .465, and for Extraversion and External Locus of Control, it is -.131. The correlation coefficient value for

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Agreeableness and Internal Locus of Control is .188, while for Agreeableness and External Locus of Control, it is .326. Lastly, the correlation coefficient value for Neuroticism and Internal Locus of Control is .408, and for Neuroticism and External Locus of Control, it is .116.

DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted to investigate the differences and relationships in personality and locus of control among individuals diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder and borderline personality disorder. The findings revealed that there is a significant difference between the variable's conscientiousness, individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder scored a mean of 34.93 (SD = 3.31), while those with Borderline Personality Disorder scored a mean of 31.17 (SD = 2.52). The t-value of 4.959, with a significance level of $p < 0.001$, shows a statistically significant difference, indicating that individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder exhibit significantly higher conscientiousness than those with Borderline Personality Disorder. Martínez-Arán et al. (2004) found that bipolar individuals particularly in the euthymic states exhibits stable and elevated conscientiousness.

For Extraversion, the average score for the Bipolar Affective Disorder was 32.93 (SD = 3.99) and for the Borderline Personality Disorder was 29.07 (SD = 4.80). The calculated t-value of 3.866 ($p = 0.001$) indicates that there is a significant difference with Bipolar Affective Disorder participants scoring higher in extraversion. Depue and Iacono (1989) found that individuals with bipolar disorder (especially in manic states) tends to exhibits higher extraversion.

For Neuroticism, the mean score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 38.27 (SD = 5.03), whereas for Borderline Personality Disorder it was 34.13 (SD = 3.65). The t-value of 4.133 ($p < 0.001$) shows a significant difference, with Bipolar Affective Disorder patients having greater neuroticism. Johnson et al. (2008) found that bipolar individuals tends to exhibit high neuroticism even in euthymic phases.

For Internal Locus of Control, the score for Bipolar Affective Disorder was 43.17 (SD = 3.92), while people with Borderline Personality Disorder yielded 39.30 (SD = 6.13). The t-value of 2.910 ($p = 0.005$) indicates a significant difference, with Bipolar Affective Disorder subjects reporting a greater internal locus of control. Johnson et al. (2008) found that individuals with bipolar tends to have trouble managing goals, as strong beliefs in their own control can lead to being overly ambitious.

For External Locus of Control, patients with Bipolar Affective Disorder scored a mean of 33.70 (SD = 4.67), whereas patients with Borderline Personality Disorder scored a mean of 27.90 (SD = 8.04). The t-value of 3.415 ($p = 0.001$) shows a statistically significant difference, implying that Bipolar Affective Disorder patients are more likely to externalize the causes of outcomes than Borderline Personality Disorder patients. Meyer et al. (2012) determined that Bipolar individuals manifest increased external LOC during depressive periods but decreased external LOC during manic periods, Scott et al. (2000) found that individuals with Bipolar Affective Disorder often show a dual attribution bias—blaming failure on external factors and success on internal ones—which helps regulate self-esteem but causes shifting control beliefs depending on their mood state. There is a significant relationship between the variable's openness and external LOC. The correlation is significant at the .01 level, indicating a moderate negative correlation, which is

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statistically significant. Hope et al. (2018) found that people with Borderline Personality Disorder who were more open to experience had a lower external locus of control, likely due to better emotional regulation.

There is a significant relationship between the variable's conscientiousness and internal LOC. Correlation is at the .05 level, showing weak to moderate positive correlation. Nudelman and Otto (2019) found that higher conscientiousness is strongly linked to a stronger internal locus of control, suggesting that believing in personal control may lead to more responsible and organized behavior.

There is a significant relationship between the variable's conscientiousness and external LOC. The correlation is significant at the .01 level, showing a moderate positive correlation. Nudelman and Otto (2019) found no clear evidence linking conscientiousness to a stronger external locus of control, suggesting that this relationship may vary depending on individual traits and situational factors.

There is a significant relationship between the variable's extraversion and internal LOC. This association is significant at the .01 level, with a moderate positive correlation. Zanarini et al. (2012) found that over a 16-year period, individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder who showed higher levels of extraversion also reported a stronger internal locus of control, indicating greater belief in personal control over life outcomes.

There is a significant relationship between the variable's agreeableness and external LOC. This association is significant at .05 level and a correlation that is positive and moderate. Zuffrey et al. (2019) found that individuals with Borderline Personality Disorder who had higher agreeableness showed better treatment outcomes, likely because they felt more in control of their therapeutic process and formed stronger therapeutic alliances.

There is a significant relationship between the variable's neuroticism and internal LOC. This is a significant correlation at the .01 level, indicating a moderate positive correlation. A contradictory finding was reported by Smith et al. (2006). They found that individuals with high neuroticism often externalize blame, linking the trait to a stronger external locus of control, though emotional regulation interventions may help shift this toward a more internal locus.

Limitations of the Study

Limited sample size restricts the generalizability of the findings and reduces the statistical power needed for more complex analysis. Potential lack of cultural and demographic diversity may limit the applicability of results to broader populations.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The findings highlight the complex relationship between personality traits and locus of control in individuals diagnosed with Bipolar Affective Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder. While certain traits like conscientiousness and extraversion were linked to internal locus of control, others such as neuroticism and agreeableness showed associations with external control beliefs, reflecting the emotional and cognitive variability in these clinical populations. These results underscore the importance of incorporating personality-based understanding into therapeutic interventions, as enhancing adaptive traits and fostering a

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balanced sense of control may support better emotional regulation and treatment outcomes in individuals with mood and personality disorders.

Future research should explore how focused interventions impact personality traits and locus of control over time, leading to more effective and integrated mental health care. Can also use larger and more diverse samples for better generalizability. Future research can also implement longitudinal designs to observe changes over time.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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