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Research Paper

Locus of Control and Academic Motivation among Students Pursuing Conventional Courses and Professional Courses: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the significance of locus control on academic motivation among students pursuing conventional courses and professional courses. The study further aimed to explore the association between academic motivation and locus of control and the gender difference in the two variables. The tools used were Academic motivation scale AMS-C28 (1992) and Levenson's scale for locus of control scale (1973). The samples were randomly selected and collected through Google form, it constituted 152 students, among which 79 were male and 73 were female. The collected data was examined using correlation and t test technique. According to the study's findings, there was no gender difference in academic motivation and locus of control, nor did they significantly correlate with one another.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Academic Motivation, Conventional Courses and Professional Courses*

Presently, the higher education sector encompasses a broad range of entry routes into academic, professional, and traditional courses, with the latter two featuring distinctly different frameworks, requirements, and results. Typically, professional courses in fields like engineering, medicine, or law have well-defined career tracks that are highly demanding in terms of both extensive academic investment and significant practical experience. Traditional courses in fields like the humanities, commerce, and pure sciences offer a wide range of academic options and flexibility, but often do not clearly lead to a specific career path from the outset. Students from both streams are likely to be leaders in the nation's future trade force, but they often face different psychological challenges resulting from their academic surroundings. Challenges including competitive entry requirements, industry-related assessments in vocational programs, and uncertainty about career prospects in standard courses affect not only academic achievement but also the internal mental process of students (Yadav, 2023). The outcome is being driven by both internal pressure and external expectations.

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Locus of control

Julian Rotter introduced the Locus of Control concept in 1966. It is a psychological concept which relates how much a person believes that they have control over the events and consequences in their life. The statement highlights the fact that individuals hold varying opinions on whether their actions contribute to the consequences that result from them. Understanding the role of students' beliefs about control is equally crucial in educational psychology to comprehend the impact on their learning, behaviour and academic outcomes. The significance of locus of control (LOC) in education stems from its influence on students' perceptions of their ability to control academic success or failure, thereby affecting motivation, engagement and overall learning experience (Schunk, 1995).

Internal locus of control

Our actions stem from what we believe to be their cause (Rotter, 1966). Individuals who have an internal locus of control relay on their own decision-making to determine the outcome of their actions.

External locus of control

This is the belief that circumstances are beyond an individual's control. According to Rotter (1966), our actions will generally follow a defined course. Primarily, individuals attribute the outcome of their actions to external circumstances such as fate or luck. This is linked to a higher external locus of control.

Academic motivation

Deci (1971), Deci and Ryan (1985) and Schunk (1991) have explained academic motivation as the interplay of internal and external factors that facilitate learning and participation among students. This motivation can generally be categorized as either intrinsic or extrinsic. The task's inherent interest or enjoyment is a source of intrinsic motivation that has been demonstrated to improve deeper learning and achievement (Ryan & Stiller, 1991). In contrast, extrinsic motivation is directed by external rewards like grades or approval and is employed because many tasks are not inherently engaging (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The source of motivation has varied, with some deriving it from external individuals and others from within.

Intrinsic motivation

Ryan and Deci (2000) identified intrinsic motivation as engaging in an activity purely for one's own sake, without requiring external rewards or pressures. Individuals driven by intrinsic motivation participate in activities voluntarily due to curiosity or because they find them engaging, rather than being compelled to perform and anticipate a specific outcome (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Frederick & Ryan, 1995).

Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation implies involving in an activity for non-external motives, like getting rewards or to avoid consequences, rather than for intrinsic reasons (Ryan & Deci, 2002). This motivation type is task-independent, focusing on outcomes that are distinct from the task itself, such as monetary rewards, praise, grades, and evading punishment (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Amotivation

Ryan and Deci (1985) introduced the concept amotivation, which defines a state where an individual has no intention to act. Ryan and Deci (2000) described this phenomenon as a deficiency in motivation.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of the study is to find out whether students with an internal locus of control and those with an external locus of control have different levels of academic motivation. This study's particular goal was to assess the distinct effects of locus of control.

Objectives

- To study the influence of locus of control on the academic motivation of students pursuing conventional courses and professional courses.
- To explore the gender differences among study variables.

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant gender difference in powerful others, chance control, individual others and academic motivation among students pursuing conventional courses and professional courses.
2. There is no significant difference in powerful others, chance control, individual others and academic motivation among students pursuing conventional and professional courses students.
3. There is no significant relationship between powerful others, chance control, individual control and academic motivation among students pursuing conventional courses and professional courses.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

A total of one hundred fifty-two participants took part in the study. These participants were from different colleges located in Kerala. Out of 152 participants, 79 were males and the remaining 73 were female. The ages of participants range from 18 and 30 years hence the study focuses on students who are doing either undergraduate or postgraduate.

Instruments

The tools used were Academic motivation scale AMS-C28 (1992) developed by Robert J Vallerand & et.al and Levenson's scale for locus of control scale (1973) developed by H Levenson.

- **Academic motivation scale AMS-C28:** Academic motivation scale-C28 developed by Robert J Vallerand (1992) measures the level of academic motivation of the college going students. It consists of 28 items in which responses are elicited in a 7-point Likert scale. The items are written in English. Responses on the items are elicited in terms of 7-point Likert scale from does not correspond at all to corresponds exactly. The 28 items can be grouped into 7 dimensions such as Intrinsic motivation - to know, Intrinsic motivation - toward accomplishment, Intrinsic motivation - to experience stimulation, Extrinsic motivation – identified, Extrinsic motivation – introjected, Extrinsic motivation - external regulation, Amotivation. This is a self-rating scale where the participant is given columns to mark their responses in corresponding space of each item.

- **Levenson's scale for locus of control scale:** Levenson's scale for locus of control scale developed by H Levenson (1973) measures the locus of control of the individual in three dimensions namely powerful others, chance control, and individual others. It consists of 24 items and each dimension has 8 items each. Respondents have to give

their responses on five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The split-half reliability of the scale was found to be: - P: 0.72 C: 0.79 I: 0.73.

Procedure

The student data was collected using the purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling was used to select intentionally college-bound individuals, as this population was appropriate for the study's purpose. It is a non-random sampling technique where participants are chosen based on particular characteristics that are pertinent to the research question. Google collected the data while using their own method.

RESULTS

Table 1: Mean, SD, and t-value obtained in powerful others, chance control, individual others and academic motivation by male (N=79) and female (N=73) students among conventional and professional students.

Variables	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	SD (Male)	SD (Female)	t value
Powerful others	21.43	22.67	4.50	5.39	1.54
Chance control	23.03	24.47	4.47	4.54	1.96
Individual others	28.65	30.15	3.96	3.27	2.51
Academic motivation	110.62	107.90	26.31	26.72	0.63

*p<0.05

Table 2: Mean, SD, and t-value obtained in powerful others, chance control, individual others and academic motivation by conventional and professional course students.

Variables	Mean (conventional)	Mean (professional)	SD (conventional)	SD (professional)	t value
Powerful others	***21.04***	***23.14***	***4.66***	***5.11***	***2.67***
Chance control	***22.72***	***24.87***	***4.37***	***4.51***	***2.97***
Individual others	***29.11***	***29.67***	***3.80***	***3.60***	***.936***
Academic motivation	***109.03***	***109.63***	***25.82***	***27.34***	***0.138***

*p<0.05

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between powerful others, chance control, individual control and academic motivation.

Variables	Powerful others	Chance control	Individual others	Academic motivation
Powerful others	1	-	-	-0.004
Chance control	-	1	-	0.313
Individual others	-	-	1	0.056
Academic motivation	-0.004	0.313	0.056	1

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

The research found no significant correlation between students studying in professional and traditional courses and that of their locus of control and academic motivation. Based on Pearson's correlation, the locus of control factors of powerful others, chance control, and personal control did not have more than moderate relationships with academic motivation.

The independent sample t-tests showed no gender differences in locus of control or academic motivation. In addition, professional and traditional students did not significantly differ in any of the variables of the study. Across groups, the results show that both genders have similarly strong views of control and corresponding motivations for learning.

DISCUSSION

The present research sought to examine possible differences in the aforementioned variables based on gender, and student course of study (general or professional), as well as the relationship between academic motivation and locus of control. Contrary to expectations, the study did not find differences between genders or by course of study nor did it find any significant relationship between locus of control and motivation. These findings, however, do provide some helpful perspective on the changing academic and psychological landscape for college students. The absence of a strong relationship between locus of control and academic motivation indicates that students' motivation styles are not solely dependent on their perceived control over outcomes. Previous work by Hajmohammadi and Aghayani (2022) determined a positive correlation between internal locus of control and motivation, possibly indicating that students may become more self-directed and goal-oriented if they have higher levels of internal locus of control. While the current study contradicts this conclusion, it is consistent with Parameswari and Shamala (2012), who also concluded that there was no statistically significant association between the two constructs. Possible contextual explanations for the current study's findings may have to do with cultural similarities across academic streams, similar educational experiences, or uniform expectations imposed on students regardless of their course.

The findings also indicated that there was no observable difference in academic motivation or any of the locus of control constructs, either powerful others or chance control, as well as individual control, between traditional students and professional students. This suggests that both student types experienced similar levels of external influence and self-direction in their academic pursuits. One possible reason for this is the increasing standardization of higher education environments in which both types of courses rely on demonstrative/progressive, performance-based assessment styles, digital learning opportunities, and generally inflexible/stiff academic demands. Bahl et al. (2024) noted that academic motivation and stress are ubiquitous across academic contexts, thus obscuring differences between traditional and professional programs.

Consistent with academic motivation, locus of control and academic motivation showed no significant gender difference. This result is consistent with Ullah et al. (2024) and Mohanty (2021) research that gender also did not shape differences in motivation. The absence of difference may reflect equality of access to educational and motivational resources and a shift toward gender equity. In current educational experiences, male and female students encounter similar opportunities and demands leading to similar motivational orientations and self-efficacy beliefs.

Interestingly, the correlation study noted a weakly positive association between academic motivation and chance control. This indicates that a subset of students may retain their motivation despite the lack of knowledge of outcomes or external influence on their engagement. This behavior suggests that moderate levels of competition or unpredictability may inspire students to take on higher levels of effort based on a challenge or curiosity. However, the small negative association between academic motivation and powerful others

indicates that authority figures from outside the student did not inhibit or facilitate motivation substantially, exemplifying the autonomy and independence of today's students.

These findings also speak to a more profound psychological change relative to behaviors in the academic setting: students may be increasingly reliant on more complex motivational systems that include peer comparison, career relevance, emotional support, and the institutional setting rather than the more classic concept of control beliefs (internal vs. external). Schunk (1995) pointed out that academic motivation is not a one-dimensional dispositional quality like locus of control, but a multifaceted, dynamic construct shaped by contextual reinforcement, self-efficacy, and feedback.

The results also suggest that when developing incentive strategies, educational institutions would not need to distinguish initiatives by gender or course type. Even in instances when the intent is to construct universal plans aimed at fostering specific elements, including self-efficacy, adaptability, or meaningful involvement in learning, they still do not need to differentiate students. This finding mirrors social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), which theorizes that motivation arises from interactions between one's beliefs, action, and environment.

Limitation of the study

- The study's findings may lack full generalizability due to the relatively small number of 152 participants.
- Purposive sampling can lead to biased results because of the significant role of the researchers' subjective opinions in choosing the sample participants.
- The research's unique cultural and environmental circumstances may restrict the degree to which the findings can be applied to other environments. Further studies in various settings may investigate the reliability of these outcomes.

Implications of the study

The findings possess significant implications for educators and curriculum designers. The study shows that students' motivation to learn may not always be based on whether they have an internal or external attitude about being in control. The institutional context and level of social support, approaches to teaching, and personal interests may play an equally, if not more, influential role. The lack of differences in the gender data suggest that the characteristics of motivation and sense of control have become relatively closer between the genders, and potentially reflect changing patterns in education. Additionally, the similarities between professional and traditional students indicate that the levels of social support provided by these academic contexts was likely parallel in nature, regardless of enrolling in either a professional course or traditional course. Therefore, as opposed to focusing on gender or course type for interventions, academic institutions should focus on creating a learning environment that engages students universally.

Suggestions for Further Studies

- In the future, studies may also explore the connection between people's locus of control and academic motivation among a much larger, more heterogeneous student population with diversified ages and educational backgrounds.
- Further study could investigate how related factors such as self-esteem, life satisfaction, and academic performance interact with locus of control and academic motivation among the same group of individuals.

- Using a longitudinal research methodology could facilitate an insight of the developmental trajectory of the locus of control and its influence on academic motivation over the course of time. This method provides a more understanding of how these elements develop and ultimately impact long-term academic results.

CONCLUSION

Taking everything into account, the findings align with the null hypothesis concerning gender and course-type disparities in the locus of control and academic motivation. More in-depth investigation into the contextual and personal factors influencing academic engagement is required, given the relatively weak links between control beliefs and academic motivation, which highlight the intricacies of motivational processes.

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Conflict of Interest
The no conflict of interest disclosed by the authors.

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