

## Locus of Control and Machiavellianism: A Study on College Undergraduates

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### ABSTRACT

In recent decades, the relationship between Machiavellianism and Locus of Control has received increasing attention in psychological research. Machiavellianism, which is one of the key traits of the dark triad, offers a keen interest in the study of self-identity traits of a person. The objective of the present study is to examine the Locus of Control and the Machiavellianism trait among 100 undergraduate students (18-21 yrs). Subjects consisted of 50 male and 50 female students of HNB Garhwal University, Srinagar (Uttarakhand). Locus of Control was assessed using Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (Dr. N. Hasain & Dr. D. D. Joshi, 1992), and Machiavellianism was assessed using A Scale of Machiavellianism (Mach IV) by Dr. S. N. Rai & Dr. Manjula Gupta. Pearsonian correlation analysis of the variables (Locus of Control and Machiavellianism) on subjects' scores revealed a negative correlation. No significant difference was found across the genders. Mean scores indicated the male students to be slightly higher on the Machiavellianism trait, and female students showed a higher mean score on Locus of Control indicating an internal Locus of Control.

**Keywords:** *Locus of Control, Machiavellianism*

Human personality is an idiographic entity, which is an interplay of various unique traits that process and form our behaviours. Individual differences can be noted on similar traits among people belonging to the same section of society. But very often, one trait can be related to another defining trait in a person. In personality psychology, Locus of Control is crucial in determining the impact of social learning in shaping a person's overall personality, while Machiavellianism, is typically a personality trait of a person who does not mind 'using someone' to achieve their goals, completely disregarding what others may feel about it or how their own motives affect the people who are involved. In recent decades, the relationship between both the constructs has received increasing attention in psychological literature. The most likely reason could be that Machiavellianism, which is one of the three traits of the dark triad, offers a keen interest in the study of self-identity traits of the person.

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The construct of Locus of Control takes its roots from Rotter's (1954) Social Learning Theory of Personality. How a person defines their own orientation of Locus of Control is conditioned on their belief that what happens to them in life is because of them or because they did something/acted a certain way- making them internally oriented, or if it is dependent upon events outside their personal control i.e. they believe things happen to them because of bad-luck or an uncongenial environment, regardless of what they do, making them externally oriented (Zimbardo, 1985). Locus of Control is considered to be an important aspect of personality. The concept was developed originally by Julian Rotter (1954), and refers to a person's belief of who controls the dynamics in the person's life, what causes those events, and what puts them in a specific situation. People who believe that things happen because of luck, or an outside force, are known to have an External Locus of Control. Such people are quick to attribute anything that happens to them to some or the other outside forces. Externals score low on Rotter's Locus of Control Scale (1966). On the other hand, people who believe that they have complete control of their life are people with an Internal Locus of Control. A person with an Internal Locus of control would score high on Rotter's Locus of Control scale. Machiavellianism or the 'manipulative personality', the term was coined after Nicolo Machiavelli owing to his famous book called 'The Prince', with the titular character portraying his views on the personality traits that are required to obtain and sustain power. The book describes Machiavelli's views on power in detail (Christie & Geis, 1970). Machiavellianism is often connoted in a negative light because of its association with the Dark Triad. It may or may not exist in a person along with Narcissism and Psychopathy, which are the other two core-traits in the triad, though, an overlap has been seen among the 3 constructs of the Dark Triad. (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). A Machiavellianism is a convincing liar (Geis & Moon, 1981), emotionally manipulative (Austin, Farrelly, Black & Moore, 2007), tends to take advantage of bestowed trust (Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe & Smith, 2002) and believes that 'the ends justify the means'. Such a person has high political intelligence, and can quickly mask their true intentions when required. The higher the person is on this construct, the more nonchalant they would be about the thought of wronging and manipulating other people (Christie & Geis, 1970).

Machiavellianism had a significant correlation with External locus of Control when Rotter's Locus of Control Scale, and Christie and Geis' Mach IV Scale, were administered to a sample of 60 retail specialty store managers (Gable, Hollon & Dangelo, 1990). Locus of Control has also been studied as a construct that acts as a moderator between Machiavellianism and performance at work. Gable and Dangelo (1994) in their study assessed this moderating effect among the store managers in a retail setting. The results indicated that Locus of Control indeed had a moderating effect but only for the managers, who tended to have an external Locus of Control.

External Locus of Control as measured by the IPC scales by Levenson (1973) where Powerful others and Chance control orientation have an external orientation, has been positively associated with Machiavellianism among the alcoholic and non-alcoholic subjects in Guenter Krampen's (1980) study on Generalized Expectations of Alcoholics, to measure

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Hopelessness, Locus of Control and Machiavellianistic tendencies in alcoholics in comparison with Non-alcoholics. The sample consisted of 56 non alcoholics and 50 alcoholics just starting to undergo treatment (middle socio-economic class living in Germany). Machiavellianism was measured using the Mach IV Scale by Christie & Geis (1970). The results revealed a positive relationship between powerful others orientation, chance control orientations and high Machiavellianism. Alcoholics had a higher mean on chance control orientations, and Machiavellianism than the non-alcoholics taken in the sample.

In another study conducted by Maroldo, Flachmeier, Johnston, Mayor, Peter and Reitan Russell (1976) to evaluate the relationship between External Locus of Control and Machiavellianism. Sample consisted of 115 college students of which 56 were boys and 59 girls, age range 18-21 years. Data for Machiavellianism and External Locus of Control were collected using Rotter's I-E Locus of Control scale and Mach IV to calculate the Machiavellianism. The obtained data were analysed using the Karl Pearson's correlation method and independent *t*-test for assessing gender differences observed a small but significant correlation between Machiavellian attitudes and external locus of control was seen, and no sex differences were noted.

Locus of Control and Machiavellianism are two key constructs in personality and self-concept. Though Locus of Control has garnered some interest by the researchers in India, Machiavellianism on the other hand stays relatively unresearched as a precursor to unhealthy social behaviour (McHoskey, 1999) as well as the concept of self. The purpose of the present study is to assess and compare two conceptions of interpersonal power i.e. Rotter's (1954, 1966) concept of internal-external control and Christie and Geis' (1970) concept of Machiavellianism among undergraduate students.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Statement of the Problem***

A study of the impact of Locus of Control on Machiavellianism among male and female undergraduate students.

#### ***Objectives***

1. To assess the relationship between Locus of Control and Machiavellianism
2. To compare the two groups (males and females) on Locus of Control and Machiavellianism

#### ***List of Variables***

##### **Independent variables**

1. Locus of Control
2. Gender
3. Age
4. Educational Qualification
5. Socioeconomic status
6. Regional setting

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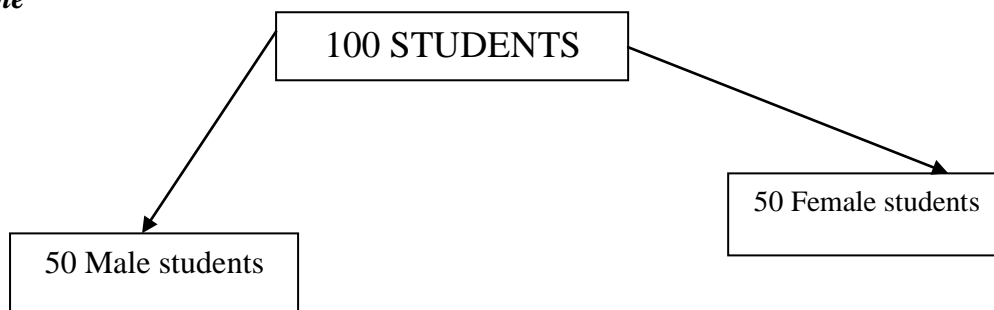
### Dependent variable

1. Machiavellianism

### Hypotheses

1. There will be a negative correlation between Locus of Control and Machiavellianism
2. There will be no significant difference among the two groups (males, and females) in the degree of correlation between Locus of Control and Machiavellianism.

### Sample



A total of 100 students comprising of 50 male and 50 female students selected through quota sampling technique were administered Rotter's Locus of Control and Mach IV test to study the relationship between the Locus of Control and Machiavellianism. The selected students living in a semi urban region of Srinagar in Garhwal, Uttarakhand, were undergraduate students pursuing BA in HNB Garhwal University within the age group of 18-21 years, all from middle socio economic status took part in the study. The undergraduate students were selected using quota sampling technique such that out of 100, 50 were males and 50 females. Questionnaires were distributed and administered in person.

### Tools

1. To measure the Locus of Control of the sample Locus of Control Scale by Dr. N. Hasain & Dr. D. D. Joshi (1992) was used. It is based on the original Rotter's (1966) I-E scale standardized and constructed in Hindi to suit the Indian population.
2. To test the Machiavellian trait of the sample, A Scale of Machiavellianism (Mach IV) by Dr. S. N. Rai & Dr. Manjula Gupta (1982) was used, which is a Hindi adaptation of the original Christie and Geis' (1970) Mach IV scale.

### Statistical Techniques

1. Keeping in view the hypotheses of the study, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) was calculated
2. Karl Pearson's Product Moment Method was used to calculate the correlation between the variables
3. t-test was employed to calculate the t-ratio across the genders

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study aimed to explore two dimensions- Rotter’s concept of Internal-external Locus of control (where a high score indicates Internal Locus of Control) and Machiavellianism. It assessed if the constructs had a negative correlation, and if there was a difference along the two genders (male and female) on the aforementioned constructs. The scores indicated that a high locus of control, which can be equated with internal locus of control and a low score with externality, has a significantly negative correlation with Machiavellianism. There was no significant difference along the genders. The results also confirm past findings where a majority of researches too indicate a negative correlation between the two constructs.

*Table 1: Mean, Standard Deviation and correlation of the total sample in relation to Locus of Control and Machiavellianism.*

Variables	Mean (N=100)	Standard Deviation (N=100)	Correlation
Locus of control	44.29	9.60355	<b>-0.25272**</b>
Machiavellianism	73.15	11.19287	

\*\* $p \leq 0.01$

As shown in Table I, the total mean for (N=100) students on the dimension of Locus of Control came out to be 44.29, and for Machiavellianism assessed by the Mach IV scale was 73.15, with standard deviation of 9.60355 and 11.19287 for Locus of Control and Machiavellianism, respectively. The derived correlation coefficient  $r = -0.25272$ , indicated a significant negative correlation at 0.01 level. This shows that Locus of control and Machiavellianism are both negatively associated with each other, thus, supporting the first hypothesis of the study.

As reported by Solar and Bruehl (1971), a person who is a high Mach and a person who has internal locus of control both strive to control their environment, but the similarity ends when one comes to define the ‘environment’ in focus. People who score high on the scale of Machiavellianism like to control other people either by treachery or some other manipulative tactic (Christie & Geis, 1970). The internals however try to control their own individual environment (objective or geographical) and lives and even value ‘self-determined rewards’(Julian & Katz, 1968)

*Table 2- Mean, Standard Deviation and t-ratio of male and female students*

Groups	N	Mean		Standard Deviation		t-ratio
		LoC	Mach	LoC	Mach	
Male	50	42.86	75.56	10.25195	8.191982	0.512924 <sup>NS</sup>
Female	50	45.72	70.74	8.778545	13.1968	

LoC=Locus of Control      Mach= Machiavellianism      NS= Not significant

The mean for Locus of control among male Ss and female Ss is 42.86 and 45.72 respectively, with a standard deviation of 10.25195 for males and 8.778545 for female Ss. The mean for Machiavellianism is 75.56 and 70.74 for male Ss and female Ss respectively, with the

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Standard deviation scores of 8.191982 in male and 13.1968 in female Ss. On conducting the t-test, the t-ratio calculated was 0.512924, which does not show a significant difference between the two genders on the measures on Locus of Control and Machiavellianism. Thus, supporting the second hypothesis.

The mean for Locus of Control among the female Ss is slightly higher than the male participants, making the female Ss slightly higher on internal Locus of Control. Internal Locus of Control has also been linked with better health (Wallstone & Wallstone, 1978), while an external locus of control has been positively linked with risk taking behaviour, and irresponsible driving (Hoyt, 1973). Machiavellianism has been associated with deception (Geis & Moon, 1981), social alienation, where high Machs are considered to be more alienated than low Machs. The high Machs are found to be less prosocial in behavior as compared to the people who score low on the construct (McHoskey, 1999). Table 2 shows a higher mean for the male sample scores on the Machiavellianism construct than the female subjects.

Galli, Nigro and Krampen (1986) measured the multidimensional locus of control using an Italian version of Levenson's IPC scale (Galli and Nigro, 1983), as reported by Galli et. al. (1986) and the construct of Machiavellianism among N=347 Italian and West German university students, a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and internality was found. The study also yielded a positive association of Machiavellianism with Powerful Others as well as the Chance scale scores. Male Ss scored higher on the construct of Machiavellianism as opposed to the female Ss. Locus of Control of a person is his perspective on the dynamics and the environment around him. If a person believes that he controls what happens in his life, he would be said to have an Internal Locus of control, while if a person feels that he does not control what happens in relation with him would be said to show some externality in his Locus of Control orientation. Meanwhile, a machiavellianistic person who is often regarded of a manipulative nature has a perspective, which has a somewhat diminished sense of morality that goes by the principle of 'ends justifying the means'. Such a person feels that his actions must only favour him. Minton (1967) pointed out that Machiavellianism can thus, be related to a specific expectancy of external locus of control.

### **CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH IMPLICATION**

The results, while supporting the hypothesis that externally oriented individuals are comparatively higher on Machiavellianism and internals are low, make Locus of control a potential predictor of Machiavellianism measure. However, there is no significant difference found between the genders. It is important to note that Machiavellianism cannot be used interchangeably with External Locus of Control because 'conceptually', and taken from the discourses mentioned in *The Prince*, Machiavellianists, going by the traits laid down by Machiavelli, are highly manipulative and have the tendency to control and turn around a situation to their advantage (Fehr, Samson & Paulhus, 1992). Therefore, its complex

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relationship with Machiavellianism needs a more detailed and careful study of the kind of interpersonal control high Machs are deemed to exert.

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