

A Comparative Study on the Usage of Locus of Control between Men and Women

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ABSTRACT

According to Julian B Rotter (1954), locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives. The locus of control is a relatively small part of an extensive personality theory given by Rotter called the Social Learning Theory. This theory consists of 2 components which divide the outcomes of our actions into internally controlled and externally controlled. This concept of internal-external (I-E), was first proposed by Rotter in 1966. People who are more relatively internal believe that they are responsible for their destiny, whereas people who are relatively more external believe that the positive and negative events that take place are determined by luck, chance or powerful people. Although it should be noted that locus of control is not a typological concept, people are neither internally nor externally controlled type. Locus of control is a continuity and people can be ordered along that sequence. The behaviour of an individual in any situation is determined by many coinciding factors. To classify someone as internal or external is a typological error which ignores these factors. This study was aimed at understanding whether men and women differ in their approach towards taking control of their actions or passing it on to others. It was a comparative study between men and women aged 18-22 years. The sample consisted of 120 subjects; 60 men and 60 women. For this purpose Levenson's scale for locus of control was used. There were 8 statements each for measuring Powerful Others (P), Chance Control (C), and Individual Control (I). Men and women did not show a great difference when it came to the externality factors as the scores are equivalent to each other in powerful others and chance control. However, they showed a marginal difference when it came to internality factor as women scored higher in individual control. Thus, the results concluded that gender does not play a major role in determining the usage of internal and external locus of control.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Men, Women*

The principle of locus of control was given by Julian Rotter in 1955. Locus of Control is a psychological concept that refers to how strongly people believe that they have control over

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the situations and experiences that affects their lives. It is the degree to which individuals perceive that outcomes result from their own behaviors or from forces that are external to themselves. A locus of control orientation is a belief about whether the outcomes of our actions are dependent on what we do (internal control orientation) or on events outside our personal control (external control orientation). Thus, locus of control is conceptualised as a unidimensional continuum, ranging from external (E) to internal (I). Rotter believed that behaviour was largely influenced by reinforcements and through factors such as rewards and punishments. Through this, individuals came to believe about what causes their actions. These beliefs, in turn, guide what kinds of attitudes and behaviours people adopt. People with higher external Locus of Control believe that they cannot have control over situations and what other people do. They also feel that their decisions are overpowered by external factors like other people, luck, chance etc. They may even believe that others have control over them and that they can do nothing but obey. People with higher internal locus of control tend to strongly believe in their own ability to control and influencing everything around them. They believe that their decisions can overpower the external factors like people, luck and chance. They see their future as being in their own hands and that their own choices lead to success or failure. It should be noted that the Locus of Control is a spectrum. Some people have a wholly internal or external locus of control, but many will have some balance both views, perhaps varying with situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As given by Rotter (1966), the locus of control is a relatively small part of an extensive personality theory given by Rotter called the Social Learning Theory. In this social learning theory, I-E is regarded as a characteristic attitude towards the world referred to as a generalized expectancy. The way a person perceives a situation is influenced by the locus of control of that person over rewards and punishments. People with higher internal locus of control tend to strongly believe in their own ability to control and influencing everything around them. They believe that their decisions can overpower the external factors like people, luck and chance. They see their future as being in their own hands and that their own choices lead to success or failure.

McGinnies, Nordholm, Ward, Bhanthumnavia, Parsons and Schneider (1974) found small differences with greater externality in the locus of control in women. This change in difference in the early research and more recent studies can be due to the change in cultural role expectations in men and women. However, it must be noted that, regardless of whether there is sex difference in I-E score, sex very often affects the magnitude of the relationship between I-E scores and other behavioural measures.

Weiner (1972) gave the notion of casual stability and locus of control. He argued that along with an internal-external dimension, people also used a stable-unstable to explain their performance. He gave 4 factors as determinants of perceived achievement: ability(internal-stable), effort(internal-unstable), task difficulty(external- stable) and luck(external-unstable).

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He believes that this casual stability dimension influences expectancy for success and that the Locus of Control dimensions influence affective responses to success and failure.

Strickland (1974) gave the notion of health and body care. He commented on the implications that locus of control offers for physical well being. He pointed out that I-E appears to be related to use of seat belts in autos, participation in physical fitness activities etc.

Seligman (1975), regarded depression as a kind of passivity with accordance to a negative cognitive set regarding the effects of the individual's behaviour. This view goes along with the fact that the external's powerlessness and low expectancies for personal control might produce a depressed reaction. In the case of internals, encountering failures or other negative outcomes should make internals, who harbour strong feelings of personal responsibility, to get depressed (Phares, 1972).

Gruen and Ottinger (1969) gave the notion of social class and ethnic differences. He stated that along with ethnic and social class differences, there are significant effects of I-E present. These differences can be reduced to explanations involving socioeconomic power and mobility. This is also another example of the fact that middle class children are more internal than lower class children.

Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld & York (1966); Crandall, Katkovsky, & Preston (1962); McGhee & Crandall (1968), attempted to explain the relationship between locus of control and achievement in school students. They found that internality was shown more in school achievement than externality. However, in college students the relationship declines or proves to be inconsistent and elusive (Phares, 1976). This might be because in case of college students, school is a highly structured and a very familiar experience and things like study habits or other specific academic experiences might be more important than locus of control, whereas reverse may be true in primary and secondary school.

Phares (1968) gave the notion of cognitive control. He found that internals are superior to externals in the criteria of utilization of information in a given problem even when both the groups have learnt the the information equally.

Crowne and Liverant (1963) gave the notion of conformity and influence. Their study suggests that internals are better able to resist group pressures than are externals. Biondo and Macdonald (1971) found conformity in externals and resistance by internals to high influence.

Hersch & Scheibe (1967); Joe (1971); Phares (1976); Strickland (1974); Strassberg (1973), observed that the locus of control beliefs are related to psychological well being or adjustment. Internals have better personal adjustment and less anxiety while externals are associated with maladjustment and anxiety. The relationship between I-E and maladjustment

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or anxiety is linear. Although, extreme internals could be so obsessed with personal responsibility that extreme guilt could produce maladjustment and extreme externals would become social misfits that are surely maladjusted.

Hersch and Scheibe(1967), Keihlbauch(1967), Rotter(1966) gave the notion of intelligence. With respect to intelligence, most research fail to find a substantial relationship to beliefs concerning locus of control.

Cornwell, Rosenthal, Shakow and Zahn (1961) found a sample of male schizophrenics to be more external than normal control subjects. Harrow and Ferrante (1969) have confirmed a similar relationship. External beliefs often seem to characterize a variety of psychiatric groups. However, the specific relationship of I-E in schizophrenia and its causes and effects are yet to be determined.

Rotter and Mulry's (1965) gave the notion of needs and power. Their study supports the notion that internals are motivated to do well in skill situations and externals by a desire to succeed under chance situations. Watson and Baumal (1967) report that internals make more errors under chance conditions whereas externals are more error prone under skill conditions.

Nowicki & Hopper (1974) and Palmer (1971) have reported findings that prove that an external orientation seems to so often accompany indices of maladjustment, that it might suggest that heavy drinkers will be more externally oriented. Meanwhile, Goss & Morosko (1970) & Gozali and Sloan (1971) found the reverse relationship. Phares (1976) attempted to solve this contradiction by pointing out that chronic alcoholics often have a history of institutionalization and participation in treatment programmes that reinforce that verbalization of confidence, self control, and personal responsibility.

According to Levenson's Locus Of control Scale, the internal-external control structure was visualised as a generalized expectancy to perceive reinforcement either as contingent upon one's own behaviors (internal control) or as the result of focus beyond one's control and due to chance, fate, or powerful others (external control). This scale of Locus Of control further differentiates the externality factor into two types, i.e., powerful others and chance control.

- **Powerful other (P control):** high scores in this criteria indicates that other people highly control your outcomes. They also strongly believe that powerful people or authoritative people control their life decisions.
- **Chance control (C control):** people with high scores indicate that random or chance situations control their outcomes
- **Individual control (I control):** people with high scores tend to believe that their outcomes are controlled by their actions. Their current situation is the direct outcome of the things they control.

METHODOLOGY

The present scale is a likert type scale with multiple choice answers. Responses range from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. This is a 5 point scale in which responses are given weight from 1 to 5.

Table 1: Scoring Key

ANSWER	SCORE
Strongly agree	5
Agree	4
Undecided	3
Disagree	2
Strongly disagree	1

The final scale consists of 24 statements, 8 for each powerful others, chance control and individual control. These statements are presented in a random order as follows

Table 2: Factors of control and their corresponding statement numbers

Serial No.	Serial Wise Statements Number	Factors
1	3, 8, 11, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22	Powerful others(P)
2	2, 6, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 24	Chance control(C)
3	1, 4, 5, 89, 18, 19, 21, 23	Individual control (I)

The split-half reliability of the scale with N=380 was found to be:-

P: 0.72

C: 0.79

I: 0.65

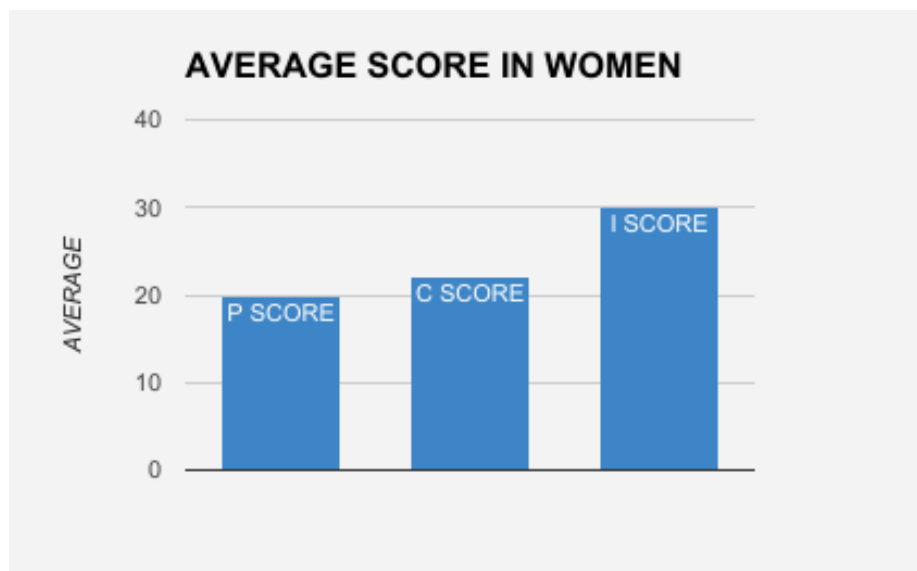
Sample

The LOCUS OF CONTROL test was conducted amongst men and women. The total sample size included 120 subjects out of which 60 were men (18-22years) and 60 women (18-22 years).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

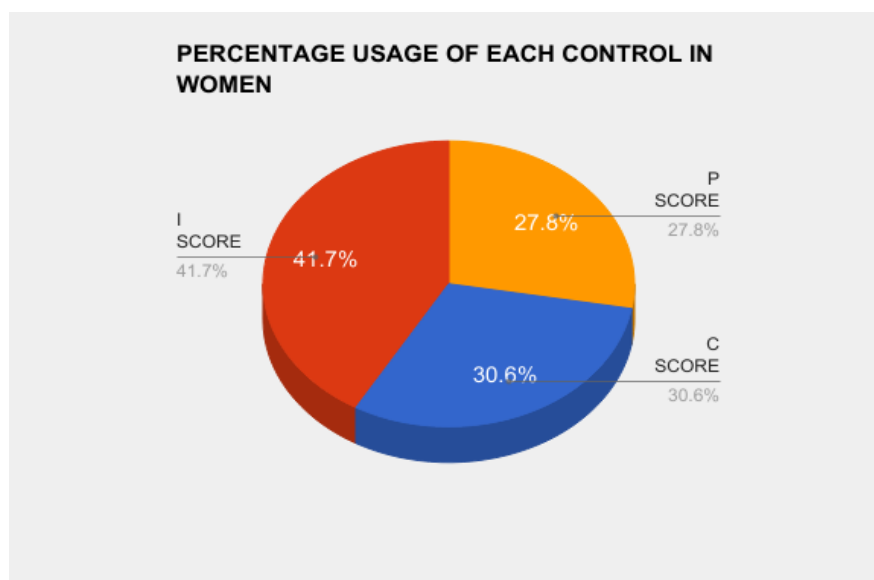
The test was conducted comparing the results of the locus of control used by men and women (18-22 years).

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Graph 1

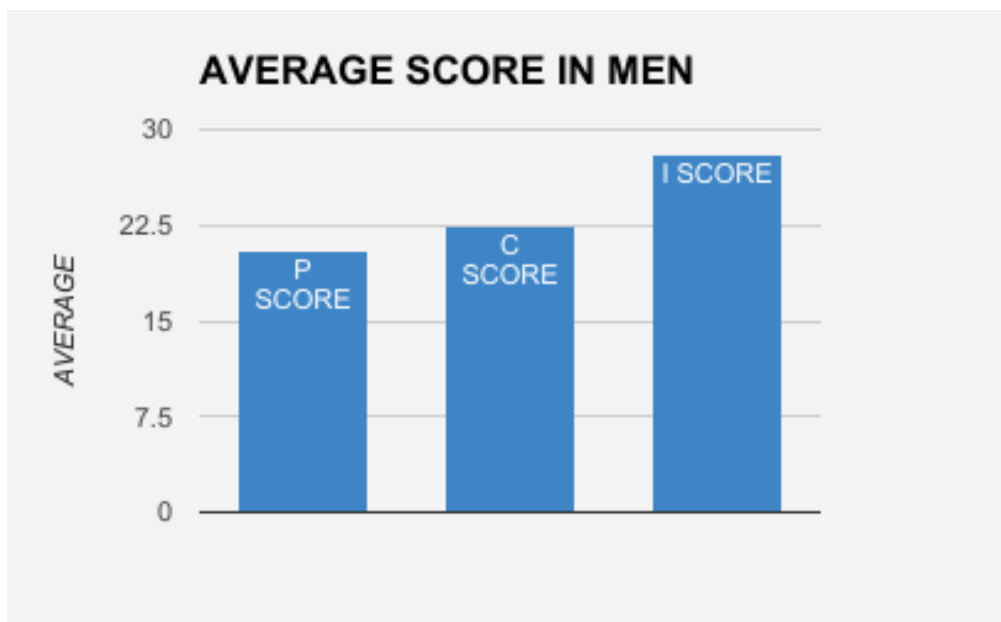
In women (18-22 years) the study showed that the average score of each control when rounded off was 20 for powerful others (P), 22 for chance control (C). The above data reflects the most frequently used control amongst women that is Individual control (I). And the least used control is Powerful others (P).



Graph 2

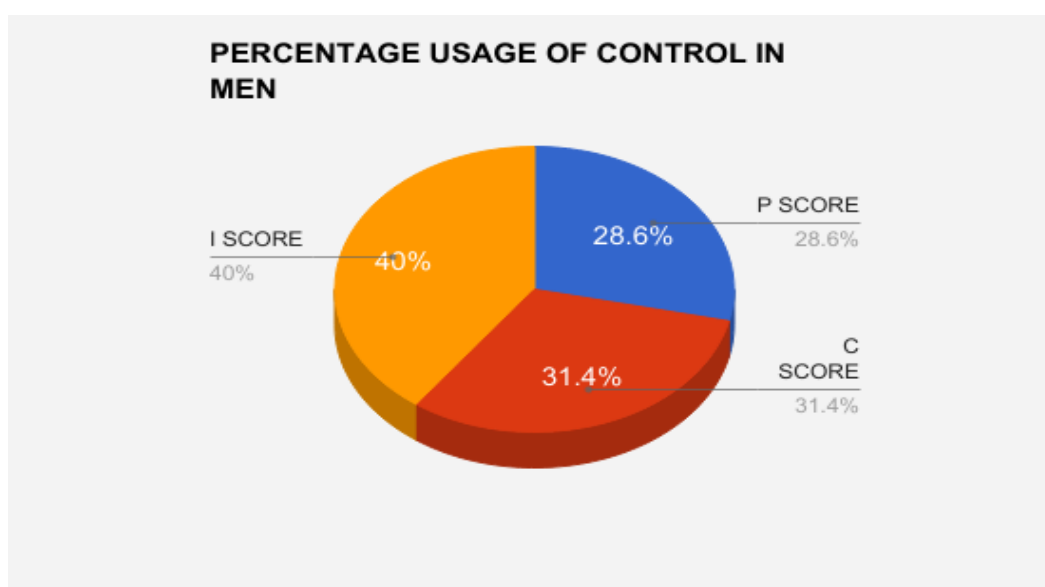
The percentage of usage of each control in women (18-22 years) is 27.8% for P control, 30.6% for C control and 41.7% for I control.

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Graph 3

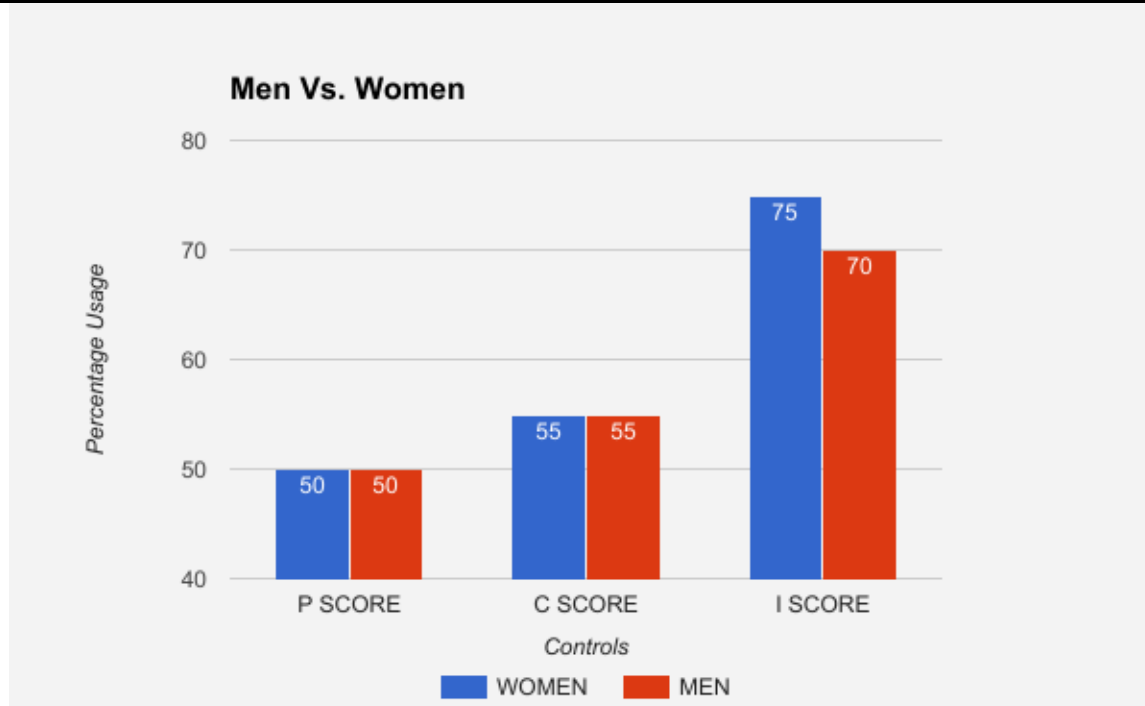
In men (18-22 years) the study showed that the average score of each control when rounded off was 20 for powerful others, 22 for chance control, 28 for individual control. The above data reflects that the most frequently used amongst men is individual control and the least used control is powerful others.



Graph 4

The percentage of usage of each control in men (18-22 years) is 28.6% for P score, 31.4% for C score, 40% for I score.

CONCLUSION



Graph 5

The above graph is a comparison of all the types of controls used by men and women. The graph reflects that the most frequently used control amongst both men and women is Individual Control with a score of 75 in women and 70 in men.

This shows that both men and women tend to believe that their outcomes are controlled by their actions and that their current situation is the direct outcome of the things that they control. They believe that their decisions can overpower the external factors like powerful others chance situations. They see their future as being in their own hands and that their own choices lead to success or failure.

This also shows that gender affects the internality factor marginally, as women have scored higher in individual control.

The Chance Control score for both men and women is the same at **55**. This is also the second highest used control. This concludes that both men and women believe that random or chance situations control their outcomes. Although they do not fester this belief to a great extent.

The Powerful Others score for men and women is also the same with a score of 50. This is the least used control. This shows that both men and women sometimes believe that other people highly control their outcomes and powerful people or authoritative people control their life decisions. Although the low score indicates that this is not a very popular belief. Men and women do not show a vast difference when it comes to the externality factors as the scores are equivalent to each other in powerful others and chance control. However, it can be seen that they show a marginal difference when it to comes to internality factor as women

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have scored higher in individual control. Thus it can be concluded that gender does not play a major role in determining the usage of internal and external locus of control.

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