

Type of Education, Locus of Control and Optimistic - Pessimistic Attitude among Undergraduate College Students

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ABSTRACT

The type of education and locus of control are significant variables in forming optimistic-pessimistic attitude among students. The main aim of the present study, therefore, was to study the effect of type of education and locus of control on optimistic- pessimistic attitude of undergraduate college students. The other objectives were to find out whether arts-commerce and science students differ in their locus of control as well as to examine the relationship between locus of control and optimistic-pessimistic attitude. An incidental (quota) sample of 160 students from different colleges in Islampur and Sangli city was selected for this study, in which 80 students were from arts-commerce faculty and 80 students were from science faculty. Each group comprised 40 male and 40 female students. The age range of students was from 18 to 20 years (M= 18.6 and SD= 0.7yrs). Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scale developed by Parashar (1998) and Locus of Control Scale (LOC Scale) prepared by Singh and Bhardwaj (2010) were used for collecting the information. The data were analyzed by testing the significance of mean difference and calculating coefficient of correlation. The results reveal that, arts-commerce and science students differ significantly on optimistic-pessimistic attitude and locus of control. Science students were more optimistic than arts-commerce students. Also students with internal locus of control were more optimistic than students with external locus of control. Moreover, science students have internal locus of control than arts-commerce students. Furthermore, internal locus of control was positively and significantly correlated with optimistic attitude.

Keywords: *Type of Education, Locus of Control, Optimistic-pessimistic Attitude, Undergraduate College Students*

College life is crucial stage of any student's life. It is the age of acquiring knowledge and skills as well as forming right attitudes. How much student feels hopeful and confident about his career and life is largely depend upon the type of education being received and the way he/she thinks about his/her future. Thus, the type of education selected by the students and his/her attitude plays significant role in students' life.

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OPTIMISTIC-PESSIMISTIC ATTITUDE

Attitudes in humans are generally expressed as positive and negative and they are often denoted by terms optimism and pessimism respectively. Optimism is a personality dimension which denotes that most situations work out in the end for the best. There are various personal and social outcomes of optimistic approach, which may include more achievement in any task and goal, higher level of life satisfaction, better health, and feeling of control over life. Optimists think that the world is a positive place as they believe people and events are inherently good and it is the expectations of positive outcome. As a result, this strong belief and positive attitude is helpful to deal with situations very effectively and successfully. Pessimism, on the other hand, is a tendency to stress the negative or unfavorable view. Pessimists perform more poorly in various places like school, work, and play than optimists. Pessimists have poorer resistance, weaker immune systems, are more susceptible to depression, and age physically faster than the optimists (Clark, 1997). It is also found that optimism is positively related with psychological well-being (Tadhy, Chelli, and Padiri, 2015)

LOCUS OF CONTROL

Locus of control (LOC) is said to be one of the major personality attributes influencing behavior. It is framework of Rottor's (1954) social-learning theory of personality. It refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. It refers to whether individuals believe that they perceive inside factors or outside factors as responsible for what happens to them in their life (Clolinger, 2000). It is the individual's belief that the events of their lives are related to their own behavior. Thus, the effects of reward or reinforcement on preceding behavior depend in part on whether the individual perceives the reward as contingent on his own behavior or independent of it. It means that LOC may be either internal or external. An individual who believes that an outcome or reinforcement is a function of fate or chance, under the control of others, or unpredictable may be described as having an external belief of locus of control. The individual who expects an outcome or reinforcement to be contingent upon his or her own behavior may be described as having an internal belief of locus of control. Individuals with internal locus of control believe that the outcomes of their actions are result of their own abilities. They also believe that they can influence the work environments, whereas individuals with external locus of control believe that events which happen in their lives are controlled by factors beyond their control and even that their own action are a results of external factors, such as fate, luck, the influence of powerful others. Thus the LOC concept is based on the cause and consequence relationship and therefore, future expectations can be construed in terms of current behavior. Externals are less willing to take risks, to work on self-improvement and to better themselves through remedial work than internals. Internals are less prone to depression than externals, as well as being less prone to helplessness. Perhaps not surprisingly, those with an external locus of control are more susceptible to depression as well as other health problems, and

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tend to keep themselves in situations where they will experience additional stress, feeling powerless to change their own circumstances, which just add to their stress load (Elizabeth 2007). Similar results are also found in some other studies (Gemmill and Heisler, 1972; Anderson et al, 1977).

TYPE OF EDUCATION

The concept 'type of education,' as used in this study, refers to the kind of educational course being pursued by the students of the given subgroups to which they belong. The students of this study are all under graduate college students in the first year of the degree courses. They are divided into two subgroups depending on faculties to which they belong. Thus the two subgroups of students are arts, commerce and science.

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Education plays a very important role in the development of human being. As students enter in the college world by choosing a particular course they begin to behave, think according to education they receives. Also some personality attributes like optimistic-pessimistic attitude and locus of control also showed their powerful impact on their educational behavior. Thus, whether student forms optimistic or pessimistic attitude will largely depend on the type of education received by the students and his/her locus of control belief.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study was to find out the difference between optimistic-pessimistic attitude of students in relation to type of education and locus of control. The other objective was to examine the difference between locus of control among arts-commerce and science students as well as to bring out the relationship between locus of control and optimistic-pessimistic attitude. The following hypotheses were formulated on the basis of these objectives.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There would be significant difference in optimistic-pessimistic attitude of arts-commerce and science students.
2. There would be significant difference in optimistic-pessimistic attitude of students with internal and external locus of control.
3. There would be significant difference in locus of control of arts-commerce and science students.
4. Internal locus of control and optimistic attitude would be positively and significantly correlated.

METHOD

Sample

The present study was conducted on a sample of 160 students selected from various Arts, Commerce and Science colleges of Sangli and Islampur city (Maharashtra), in which 80 students were from arts-commerce faculty and 80 students were of science faculty. Each group comprised of 40 male and 40 female students having age range from 18 to 20 years with a mean age of 18.6 years and SD of 0.7 years. They were studying in first year of degree course. Incidental (Quota) sampling method was used for selecting the sample.

Tools

Optimistic-Pessimistic Attitude Scales by Parashar (1998): It was used to measure optimistic and pessimistic attitude of the participants. The scale contained 40 statements which had two alternatives i.e. Agree or Disagree. Out of 40 statements 20 statements represent optimistic views and remaining 20 statements represents pessimistic views. If the response to an item is in keyed direction the respondent gets a numerical score of 1 (One). The total score for a given trait is simply the sum of the items checked in the keyed direction. High score represents optimistic attitude where low score indicates pessimistic attitude of the participants. The test-retest reliability is .74 and the face validity is .77.

Locus of Control Scale (LOC Scale): A Hindi version prepared by Singh and Bhardwaj (2010) of the Nowicki and Strickland's (1973) scale was used to measure internality-externality locus of control among participants. It contained 40 items with 'Yes' and 'No' response options. A numerical value of 1 (One) was granted to each item answered in keyed direction. Higher score indicates stronger belief in the externality of control. The split half and test-retest reliability of the scale was 0.86 and 0.88 respectively. The criterion validity was 0.892.

Procedure

The students, in a small group of 10-15 students at a time, were approached in their respective colleges with prior permission of the Principals for collecting the information. They were informed about the significance and objectives of the study and were requested to record their responses as per the instructions mentioned on these two scales. At the end, they were thanked for their cooperation in the present study.

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RESULT

The first purpose of this study was to study the difference between optimistic-pessimistic attitude of arts-commerce and science students. The t value for the scores is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Means, SDs and t value for the score of optimistic-pessimistic attitude among arts-commerce (n= 80) and science students (n=80).

Groups	Mean	SD	t value
Arts-Commerce Students	27.65	5.00	6.07**
Science Students	31.48	2.75	

** $p \leq 0.01$

The results presented in Table 1 depicts that t value is significant at 0.01 level, which indicates that the science students are high on optimistic attitude than arts-commerce students. Thus, the results supported the prediction made in hypothesis 1 of this study.

The second purpose of this study was to examine the difference between optimistic-pessimistic attitude among students with internal and external locus of control. At first, two groups - external LOC students and internal LOC students are formed by taking ‘ median’ as a cut-off score for entire score distribution obtained of LOC scale. The descriptive statistics along with t value for the scores are presented in Table 2

Table 2: Means, SDs and t value for the scores of optimistic-pessimistic attitude among external LOC students (n= 80) and internal LOC students (n= 80).

Groups	Mean	SD	t value
External LOC Students	28.41	4.79	3.39**
Internal LOC Students	30.72	3.78	

** $p \leq 0.01$

The results presented in Table 2 shows that t value was significant at 0.01 level which showed significant difference in optimistic-pessimistic attitude of students with internal and external locus of control (t = 3.39). It indicates that students with internal locus of control are higher on optimistic attitude than the students with external locus of control. It supports the prediction made in hypothesis 2 of the study.

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The third purpose of this study was to examine the difference between locus of control among arts-commerce and science students. The descriptive statistics and t value for the scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Means, SDs and t value for the scores of locus of control among arts-commerce (n= 80) and science students (n=80).

Groups	Mean	SD	t value
Arts-Commerce Students	12.51	2.42	2.82**
Science Students	11.38	2.67	

** $p \leq 0.01$

The results presented in Table 3 shows that t value was significant at 0.01 level which showed significant difference in locus of control of arts-commerce and science students ($t = 2.82$). The science students have stronger belief in the internality of control than arts-commerce students. It supports the prediction made in hypothesis 3 of the study.

The fourth objective of the present study was to find out the relationship between internal locus of control and optimistic attitude. The correlation value is presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Correlation coefficient between internal locus of control and optimistic attitude (N=160).

Variables	Optimistic Attitude		
	Arts-Commerce Students	Science Students	All Students
Internal locus of control	-0.42**	-0.22**	-0.38**

** $P \leq 0.01$

The results presented in Table 4 shows that the relationship between the two variables i.e. internal locus of control and optimistic attitude was significant as $r = -0.38$ ($P \leq 0.01$). The faculty wise analysis also shows that the internal locus of control is significantly related to optimistic attitude of arts-commerce and science faculty students. Thus, the hypothesis 4 is supported by the results.

DISSCUSION

The main purpose of the study was to find out the difference between optimistic-pessimistic attitude of students in the relation to type of education and locus of control. It was also intended to study the difference between locus of control among arts-commerce and science students as well as to bring out the relationship between locus of control and optimistic attitude.

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The results of the study supported the prediction made in hypothesis 1 that there was a significant difference in optimistic-pessimistic attitude of arts-commerce and science students. From Table 1 it can be seen that science students were high on optimistic attitude than their counterparts. The science course is considered more professional as compare to arts-commerce course. There are number of career opportunities for science students which boost their confidence and assurance of successful life. Arts-commerce students, on the other hand, get basically theoretical knowledge and are deprived from technical and professional knowledge which is required in many skillful and technical fields. Because of this, science students are more likely to experience greater certainty about their future than those students who are pursuing arts-commerce courses.

Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be significant difference in optimistic-pessimistic attitude of students with internal and external locus of control. It can be seen from Table 2 that students with internal locus of control were high on optimistic attitude ($M= 30.72$, $SD 3.78$) than the students with external locus of control ($M= 28.41$, $SD=4.79$). Human behavior is largely guided by 'reinforcements' (rewards and punishments) and that through contingencies such as rewards and punishments, individuals come to hold beliefs about what causes their actions. These beliefs, in turn guide what kinds of attitude and behavior people adopt (Rotter, 1966). Singh and Mansi (2009) also found internally oriented people have better control of their behavior, more optimist and active in seeking information and knowledge concerning their situation than do externals

The results of the study also supported the prediction made in hypothesis 3 that there would be a significant difference in locus of control of arts-commerce and science students. Table 3 shows that science students are significantly differed in locus of control than arts-commerce students as $t (n=80) = 2.82$, $P \leq 0.01$. It indicate that science students ($M=11.38$, $SD=2.67$) have internal locus of control than arts-commerce students ($M=12.51$, $SD=2.42$). Science course is scientific in nature. It focuses on getting empirical evidences and objective conclusions. Arts-commerce course, on the other hand, emphasize on developing descriptive ability and theoretical views among students. Science students come to know that every action has its own reaction; nothing can happen without any reason or by chance. We are responsible for our present situation; it's nothing to do with our destiny. So, their ability to think rationally makes them different from their counterparts.

It is seen from Table 4 that the correlation value obtained between internal locus of control and optimistic attitude was positively and significantly correlated ($P \leq 0.01$). It shows that when internal locus of control is high, optimistic attitude would be high. This result is in consistent with some previous findings that showed significant relationship between internal locus of control and optimistic attitude. Guarnera and Williams (1987) found positive correlation between internal locus of control and optimism. Singh and Mansi (2009) also reported a correlation of -0.15 between internal locus of control and optimism.

LIMITATIONS

There were some limitations of the study; firstly students from only two colleges of Sangli and Islampur city were included. The results would be more generalized if students from more colleges from different places could be included. The role of gender differences would be considered for further exploration in relation to the constructs included in the present study.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study have showed that science students were found more optimistic and had stronger belief in the internality locus of control as compare to arts-commerce students. Students with internal locus of control were also more optimistic than the students with external locus of control. The results have also shows that internal locus of control was positively and significantly correlated with optimistic attitude. All these findings of the study were in line with the hypothesized predictions.

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