

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCUS OF CONTROL AND ACHIEVEMENT  
MOTIVATION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS**

**A. RAJ KUMAR**, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPT. OF PSYCHOLOGY, ST. THOMAS  
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE, CHENNAI. EMAIL - [sark.socialist@gmail.com](mailto:sark.socialist@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they have control over the outcome of events in their lives, as opposed to external forces beyond their control. Comprehension of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality studies. A person's "locus" is conceptualized as internal (a belief that one can control one's own life) or external (a belief that life is controlled by outside factors which the person cannot influence, or that chance or fate controls their lives). Individuals with a strong internal locus of control believe events in their life derive primarily from their own actions and tend to praise or blame themselves and their abilities. People with a strong external locus of control tend to praise or blame external factors. The term achievement motivation may be defined by independently considering the words achievement and motivation. Achievement refers to competence and motivation refers to the energization and direction of behavior. Thus, achievement motivation may be defined as the energization and direction of competence-relevant behavior or why and how people strive toward competence (success) and away from incompetence (failure). Research on achievement motivation has a long and distinguished history. In fact, researchers have focused on achievement motivation concepts since the emergence of psychology as a scientific discipline (i.e., the late 1800s), when William James offered speculation regarding how competence strivings are linked to self-evaluation. Thus, the study aims to find the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation among college students of the current generation. The study is cross-sectional in nature and the age of the students ranged from 21-28 years.

**Introduction**

**Locus of control**

There are many ways of describing and understanding personality – the holistic approach, the types approach, the trait approach and the dimensional approach, to name a few.

It was Eysenck (1952) who brought the term “dimension” technically into use in the scientific study of personality. In his theory of personality there are four levels of behavior. At the third level, traits which are “an observed constellation”, of individual action tendencies. At the 4th level, the traits are organized into general “types” which are “an absorbed constellation or syndrome of traits”. Using number of tests & questionnaires, Eysenck obtained ratings on 39 traits from a large number of neurotic patients. Making a factorial analysis of these test result, he arrived at two factors at the 4th level of personality organization. This he called, “Dimension” of personality. According to him the two dimensions were (1) neuroticism & ii) a dichotomy loosely related to introversion – extraversion.

The Internal – External dimension (I-E) pertains to the degree to which an individual perceives reinforcement as resulting from his own actions or sees them as stemming from forces such as luck, chance, fate or other powerful figures in his life. Research conducted has demonstrated the activity of this conflict and the predictive efficiency of a measure of this generalized expectancy. (Lefcount, 1966, Rotter, 1966) The concept of I.E. of control developed out of the social learning theory (Rotter, 1956)

Locus of control refers to a set of beliefs about the relationship between behavior & the subsequent occurrence of rewards & punishments. The more precise phrase for these beliefs is internal versus external control of reinforcement whenever reinforcement (either positive or negative) are perceived by the individual as being the result of his or her own behavior, efforts or relatively permanent characteristics, an example of internal belief. External beliefs in contrast, involves perceptions that reinforcements occur as the result of luck, chance, fate or the interventions of powerful others or else are simply unpredictable because of the complexity of events.

Locus of control has generated much research in a variety of areas in psychology. The construct is applicable to such fields as educational psychology, health psychology and clinical psychology. Debate continues whether specific or more global measures of locus of control will prove to be more useful in practical application.

### **Definition of concept of achievement motivation**

The achievement has been used in the behavioral researches to mean different things. McClelland (1953) employs the term with reference to any content area which comprises everything that represents a completion of excellence. The standard of excellence may be task – related or self-related or other related. Thus, evaluation of a performance constitutes to the important features of achievement.

Achievement motivation is the motive to achieve something worthwhile. It means essentially the urge to solve difficult and challenging problems.

Motivation to achieve is instigated when an individual knows that he is responsible to the outcome of some venture, when he anticipates explicit knowledge of results that will define his success or failure, and when there is some degree of risk.

James (1980) first mentioned the importance of achievement striving. He talks of man's self-regard as being determined by self-imposed goals, the achievement of which to feeling of well-being and elevation, while bring about frustrate and humiliation.

According to Weber (1904) persons who are high in achievement motivation, "gets nothing out of his/her wealth for themselves, except the irrational sense of having his job well".

### **Relationship between Locus of Control & Achievement Motivation:**

Blueiewicz and Catherine Olt (1987) studied the relationship between achievement, locus of control and future time orientation. The participants were 10<sup>th</sup> graders from large sub-urban public high school located in a metropolitan area. A total of 128, 10<sup>th</sup> graders, 79 female and 49 males, were administered the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control scale, the time metaphors test & the dependency scale introduced by author.

The relationship between achievement, locus of control and future time orientation were analyzed using multiple correlation statistical procedures. The relationship between achievement & dependency scale data were analyzed by means of three factor (2\*2\*2) analysis of variance with one factor treated as repeated measure.

The analysis of the data revealed no significant relationship across the entire sample between the variables of locus of control and achievement motivation for participants. In males, a significant correlation of moderate effect was found between high achievement motivation & external locus of control. For females, no significant relationship was found between achievement & future time orientation across the entire sample. The analysis of the relationship between achievement & the data from the dependency scale revealed a significant interaction between achievements an objective versus claimed independence. Achievers were found to be more independent than under achievers on objective indicators of independence, while under achievers were more independent than achievers on claimed indicators of independence.

Misra (1986) studied locus of control and attribution for achievement outcomes. A sample of 40 female under graduates were studied by using Levenson & Miller (1976) I-E coins on control scale. A binary prediction task, a set of 5-point likert type items to obtain attributional responses to self-responsibility, task difficulty, effort, luck, experimenter, memory & motivation & 7 semantic differential type scales to measure task perception. The results indicated that internally controlled subjects used employ self-protective motivational processes in attribution.

### **Significance of the study**

Various researchers from various periods of time have conducted the study in many population types in similar or related topics. However, there have been several inconsistencies in the outcomes. This is because, the researches were conducted on various population types where it may differ in ethnic, cultural, social, economical and other constituent factors. Further, the scientific advancements would also influence the human evolution from time immemorial, which in turn would initiate change in a person's opinion, ideas, behavior, attitudes etc.

A study conducted by LaPiere in 1934 was pivotal in establishing a gap between attitudes and behaviours. As LaPiere had expected, there was no consistency between the symbolic attitudes and actual behavior. Similarly, this study aims to find out the influence of locus of control on achievement motivation considering the central belief system as an attitude and predicting it to express in one of the behavioural aspects like achievement motivation.

### **Objectives**

1. To find out whether there was any relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation among college students.

### **Hypotheses**

1. There will be a positive relationship between individual control subscale of internal locus of control and achievement motivation.
2. There will be a negative relationship between chance control subscale of external locus of control and achievement motivation.
3. There will be a negative relationship between powerful others subscale of external locus of control and Achievement motivation

### **Research Design**

A cross sectional research design was used to collect the data. Analysis of the data was done using Pearson's Co-efficient of Correlation for the present study. The design was ex-post-facto in nature because the investigator did not experimentally manipulate any of the variables, namely, locus of control and achievement motivation. Thus, the study became essentially univariate.

### **Sample**

The sample of the present study was selected from first and second year post graduate students studying arts, science, and professional subjects of various colleges in Chennai city. The age of the sampling ranged from 21-28 years with mean age of 23 years. Convenient sampling technique was adopted for the present study.

100 students were contacted and the questionnaire was distributed to all. The sample were chosen in such a way that they belong to various religions including Hinduism, Christianity and Islam. Out of 100 students only 80 have completed and returned the questionnaire to the investigator. The sample consisted of both male and female students equal in numbers. In the questionnaire, blank was given in order to fill their respective religion and there it was also instructed orally to write their system

of belief rather than writing one's religion by certificate. After collection and evaluation of the questionnaire, individual interaction was made with the respondents based on the answers given by them, with a motive to analyze their self-opinion.

### **Variables of the study**

The following variables were used in the present study:

- 1) Locus of Control
  - a) Individual control as a subscale of locus of control
  - b) Chance control as a subscale of locus of control
  - c) Powerful others as a subscale of locus of control
- 2) Achievement motivation

### **Operational definitions**

**Locus of control:** is operationally defined as the total score obtained in the Levinson's locus of control scale.

**Achievement motivation:** is operationally defined as the total score obtained by the student in Ray-Lynn scale for achievement motivation.

### **Tools used**

In the present study, the following instruments were used.

1. Scale for Locus of control (1981) by Levenson.
2. Achievement Motivation scale (1976) by Ray and Lynn.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the analysis of the data and its discussion.

Table 1: shows the relationship between achievement motivation and individual control subscale of internal locus of control.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	R	significance
Achievement Motivation	-.047	.676
Individual Control		

Table 1 shows there is no relationship between achievement motivation and individual control subscale of internal locus of control.

Table 2: shows the relationship between achievement motivation and chance control subscale of external locus of control.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	R	Significance
Achievement Motivation	-.066	.560
Chance Control		

Table 2 shows there is no relationship between achievement motivation and chance control locus of control.

Table 3: displays the relationship between achievement motivation and powerful others subscale of external locus of control.

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Variable	R	significance
Achievement Motivation scores	-.193	.086
Powerful Others		

Table 3 shows there is no significant relationship between achievement motivation and powerful others subscale of external locus of control.

## **OVERALL DISCUSSION**

The following discussion is made on the interpretation of the result in accordance to the hypotheses formed and also on the qualitative observation made on interacting with the respondents.

During the test conduction and the evaluation of the questionnaire, it was noted that few people volunteered themselves, registering their choice of religion as “Secularism”, “Rationalism” “Irreligionism”. However, the above choices were found among the people who were Hindu by certificate.

The relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation has no significance. The hypotheses is also rejected. The results made by Agarwal and Misra in 1986 revealed that internally controlled subjects were used to employ self- protective motivational process in attribution. This makes one to know whether people controlled internally or externally may or may not associate themselves to strive for perfection or achievement motivation. It should also be noted that although there were no significant correlations between the locus of control (both internal and external loc) and the motivation for achievement, the data shows a slightly negative relationship. There is a minor negative relation between the chance control subscale of external control locus and the motivation for achievement. This helps interpret that people who are motivated by higher levels of achievement tend to believe less in luck, destiny or fate.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the present-day study were as follows.

1. There was no significant relationship between individual control sub-scale of internal locus of control and achievement motivation.
2. There was no significant relationship between chance control sub-scale of external locus of control and achievement motivation.
3. There was no significant relationship between powerful others subscale of external locus of control and achievement motivation.

## **Limitations**

1. The study is limited college going students who belong to the age group of 21 to 28.
2. The study was carried out only among students who can read and comprehend English language as the questionnaire was in that language.
3. As the study is in ex-post facto nature, cause and effect relationship could not be convincingly established.

## **Future Scope for research**

1. A similar study can be conducted on a larger sample.
2. The study can be extended to students belonging to high and low socio- economic status.

3. A study can be carried out by taking factors such as social media and technological advancements into consideration and their influence.
4. A qualitative study exploring the positive and negative aspects of internal and external locus of control and its impact on college students can be undertaken.

## REFERENCE

- Agarwal, R. & Misra, G. (1968). Locus of control and attribution for achievement motivation outcomes, *Psychological studies*, 31(1), 15-20.
- Bluesiewicz, Catherine olt (1938). The association of locus of control and future time orientation with achievement and underachievement, *Dissertation abstract, International*, 44(5), 1816A.
- Eysenck, H. J. (1952). The effects of psychotherapy: an evaluation. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 16(5), 319–324. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0063633>
- Ghosh, P. (2005). Max Weber and William James: 'Pragmatism', Psychology, Religion. *Max Weber Studies*, 5.2/6.1, 243-280. Retrieved February 17, 2020, from [www.jstor.org/stable/24581967](http://www.jstor.org/stable/24581967)
- James, W. (1950a). Principles of psychology (Vol. 1). New York: Dover. (Original work published 1890)
- James, W. (1950a). Principles of psychology (Vol. 2). New York: Dover. (Original work published 1890)
- Lefcourt, H. M. (1966). Internal versus external control of reinforcement: A review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 65(4), 206–220. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0023116>
- Levenson, H., & Miller, J. (1976). Multidimensional locus of control in sociopolitical activists of conservative and liberal ideologies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33(2), 199–208. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.33.2.199>
- Mc Clelland & David.C., (1961). *The Achieving Society*, Vakils, Feffer and Senions Priorate Ltd., India.
- Phares, E. J., & Rotter, J. B. (1956). An effect of the situation on psychological testing. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 20(4), 291–293. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0049347>
- Lapierre, R. T. (1934). Attitudes vs. Actions. *Social Forces*, 13(2), 230–237. doi: 10.2307/2570339
- Rotter, J. B. (1954). Social learning and clinical psychology. Prentice-Hall, Inc. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10788-000>
- Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 80(1), 1–28. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0092976>