

## Gender Differences in Locus of Control

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### Abstract

*In the present study, the gender difference in locus of control was examined in a sample of 281 adolescents (152 from favorable home environment and 129 from unfavorable home environment) within the age range of 14-18 years, and constant family type and socioeconomic status. The measures used for collecting data were Socio-Economic Status Scale; self developed Home Environment Scale and Locus of Control Scale. SPSS program was used for analyzing the data. The results of the study revealed that there are significant gender differences in locus of control. Boys were found to be more internal as compared to girls.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, Locus of Control, Home Environment.*

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### **Introduction**

According to Wikipedia, locus of control is the term which refers to a person's belief about what causes the good or bad result in his / her life, either in general or in specific area such as health or academics. It can either be internal (meaning the person believes that they controls themselves and their life) or external (meaning they believe that their environment, some higher power or other people control their decisions and their life). The locus of control refers to the degree to which an individual believes the occurrence of reinforcement is contingent on his / her own behaviour. The factors involved with reinforcement expectancy are labeled 'external' and the 'internal' control (Rotter, 1954).

Locus of control is best understood as a bipolar construct ranging from external to internal. In external locus of control an individual believes his behaviour is guided by fate, luck or other external circumstances. In case of internal control orientation, an individual believes that his behaviour is guided by his personal decisions and efforts. Locus of control has important role to play in developing such

qualities in an adolescent as leadership and adjustment. An internal versus external locus of control plays an important role in building up the personality characteristics of an adolescent. Studies have shown that anxiety, poor performance and social conduct are related to the perceived problems such as external locus of control and self esteem. On the other side of the coin there are number of factors like age, socioeconomic status, family style and gender that affect locus of control. As children grow older, they gain skills that give them more control over their environment. Several studies (Shute et al, 1984; Skinner et al, 1998 and Weisz & Stipek, 1982) have reported that locus of control orientation during childhood tend to be more external than locus of control orientation during adolescence and adulthood. The development of locus of control is associated with family style and resources, cultural stability and experiences with effort leading to reward. Many internals have grown up with families that have modeled typical internal beliefs. These families emphasize effort, education, responsibility and thinking. Parents typically gave their children rewards they have

promised them. Socioeconomic status also affects the locus of control. Externals are typically associated with lower socioeconomic status because poor people have less control over their lives. Gender is one of the most crucial factor that influences an individual's locus of control. Several studies have been conducted in this context like Manger and Eikeland (2000) examined the relationship between locus of control, level of ability and gender in a sample of Norwegian 14 and 15 years old students. No relationship was found between locus of control and level of stability. Girls were found to have higher total internal locus of control than boys. Gursoy and Bicacki (2007) investigated the locus of control and self concept of children from low socio-economic level in a sample of 200 children in the age range of 10 to 12 years. They observed that both locus of control and self concept of girls to be negative as compared to boys. Further, it was also found that the locus of control and self concept for 12 year old children were more positive as compared to the 10 year old children. Saleh Almajali (2012) studied the relationship of family upbringing with locus of control amongst 646 middle school learners of Jordan. The results of the study revealed that there is a significant and positive relationship between upbringing style and locus of control and no relationship between gender and locus of control of middle school learners. The literature regarding the gender differences in locus of control reflects some contradiction among researchers, with some studies showing gender differences in locus of control (Gursoy and Bicacki 2007) while others reporting no difference (Lester, 2002 and Saleh Almajali, 2012).

The above contradiction in research motivated the investigator to extend the efforts in the direction of comparison of locus of control of adolescent boys and girls.

## Hypothesis

There is no significant gender difference in locus of control of boys and girls in relation to home environment.

## Method

### Sample

The sample for the study comprised of 600 participants (300 boys & 300 girls) in the age range of 14-18 years belonging to nuclear families with middle socioeconomic status obtained from 1080 students after administering them Socio-Economic Status Scale. These 600 subjects of constant age, socio-economic status and family type were administered Home Environment Scale for obtaining the final sample for the study. The final sample comprised of 281 subjects (152 subjects with favorable and 129 with unfavorable home environment).

### Tools

Three tools were used for the current study viz. (i) Socio-Economic Status Scale (ii) Home Environment Scale, and (iii) Locus of Control Scale.

**Socio-Economic Status Scale:** - This scale was developed by R.L. Bharadwaj for literate people. There are seven areas with varying number of items in the scale measuring social and economic status of an individual. It is a self administered test. There are five response option alternatives against each item i.e. 1 for 'Very high', 2 for 'High', 3 for 'Ordinary', 4 for 'Low' and 5 for 'Very low'. The test-retest reliability coefficients calculated for the seven areas were found to be: 'Family',  $r=0.76$ , 'Social',  $r=0.69$ , 'Education',  $r=0.86$ , 'Profession',  $r=0.74$ , 'Caste',  $r=0.94$ , 'Total assets',  $r=0.69$ , 'Monthly income',  $r=0.74$  and 'Scale (as a whole)',  $r=0.76$ . The content validity of the revised scale, since areas and then items are solely based on research proven items.

**Home Environment Scale:** - This scale was developed by the researcher during the tenure of research. It is an instrument to measure the psychosocial climate of home as perceived by the children. The scale has 50 items belonging to 10 dimensions of the home environment. The various dimensions of the present scale are (i) Protectiveness (ii) Parental involvement (iii) Academic stimulation (iv) Reward (v) Parental warmth (vi) Punishment (vii) Participation in home affairs (viii) Control (ix) Permissiveness (x) Parental expectations. The split half reliability of the present scale is 0.74. Test-retest reliability for the scale was found to be 0.69. The

0.78 for postgraduate students. The reliability coefficient for the entire sample was found to be 0.80. The validity coefficient of the scale is 0.77.

**Data Collection**

The investigator collected the data by seeking prior permission from school authorities and administered the above scales and responses were obtained from the respondents.

**Results and Discussion**

Results of the study are presented in the following tables: -

**Table 1 : Means SDs and Z-values for locus of control scores**

Home environment	Group	N	Mean	S.D.	z-value	p-value
Favourable	Boys	73	34.21	9.32	3.26	<0.01
	Girls	79	39.28	9.90		
Unfavourable	Boys	66	49.33	11.80	2.94	<0.01
	Girls	63	55.19	10.81		

scale possesses the content validity as measured with the help of views expressed by judges. The concurrent validity of the scale was found to be 0.67.

**Locus of Control Scale:** - This scale was developed by Km. Roma Pal. It consists of 35 pairs of items. The scoring procedure of the scale is very simple. 2 marks are given to all those items which are related to external and 1 mark to all those items which are related to internal locus of control. Test-retest reliability was found to be

Minimum value of z at 0.05 significance level = 1.96

Minimum value of z at 0.01 significance level = 2.58

From the above results it is clear that there is gender difference in locus of control of boys and girls of favourable and unfavourable home environments. Girls of both favourable and unfavourable home environment have greater score than boys meaning thereby they are comparatively more external.

**Table 2 : Frequency counts and Chi square values.**

Home Environment	Gender	Extreme External		High External		The Average		High Internal		Extreme Internal		$\chi^2$ - value	p-value
		F	%age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age	F	%age		
Favourable	Boys	0	0.00	1	1.37	17	23.29	34	46.57	21	28.77	11.32	<0.05
	Girls	0	0.00	5	6.33	31	39.24	34	43.04	9	11.39		
Unfavourable	Boys	0	0.00	31	46.97	22	33.33	8	12.12	5	7.58	11.90	<0.05
	Girls	0	0.00	46	73.02	7	11.11	8	12.70	2	3.17		

Minimum value of  $t$  at 0.05 significance level=9.49

Minimum value of  $t$  at 0.01 significance level=13.28  $df=4$

The above results showed that there is a gender difference in locus of control of boys and girls. More boys than girls of favourable as well as unfavourable home environments are extremely internal whereas more girls than boys from the same groups are high external.

The findings of the present study related to the gender difference in locus of control of adolescents presented and analyzed in the above section showed that there is a significant gender difference in locus of control between boys and girls of favourable and unfavourable home environments (Table 1 & 2). In all girls have higher locus of control than boys. The reason for these results can be that girls adopt a sentimental rather logical approach towards events when compared with boys and seek the reasons for events, not in themselves but outside. There are natural gender characteristics which are inborn. The nature has provided not only the physical but mental, emotional, social and other aspects in which these differ. The present day scenario has changed and at many places we see the reversal of roles. This means that previously there were some distinct roles specified for male as well as for female but in the present scenario girls have entered those professions which were dominated by boys and in some cases the reverse is also true. This has led to not only in change in temperament but also in their efficiency to do things because of their self concept and self confidence. This has made us to believe that there are differences in locus of control and this may be due to the change in perceptions of the present environment. These results are supported by the findings of Mamlin, Harris and Case (2001) and Gursoy and Bicakci (2007) who observed that females have external locus of control as compared to males.

The present study revealed that boys are more internal than girls, so there is a need to provide congenial environment to the adolescents especially for girls. Girls need more counselling for helping them to believe in themselves and their capabilities.

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