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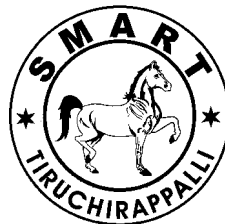
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CORRELATION BETWEEN LOCUS OF CONTROL AND HAPPINESS AMONG POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The present study tries to examine the relationship between Locus Of Control (LOC) and Happiness, among postgraduate students in India. Moreover, the study also examined the moderating role of gender between the above said relationship. Data were collected from postgraduate students, by using self-administered survey questionnaires. Data analysis showed that there was significant positive relationship between LOC and Happiness among students in India. No gender-wise differences were found in the sample, regarding LOC and Happiness level.

Key words: Locus of Control, Student Happiness, Gender Differences.

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1. Introduction

Locus of control consists of the degree to which people report a sense of personal control in daily occurrences and this concept has been dichotomized into internal and external locus of control **(Rotter, 1966)**. Individuals, with an internal locus of control, perceived that occurrences are the outcome of their own acts while individuals, with an external locus of control, perceived that the occurrences are the outcome of chance, luck, or the impact of other people. Especially, internality refers to the perception that the individual is in control or influential in obtaining benefits from the environment around them while externality refers to the perception that benefits are out of the individual's control and they are driven by chance or luck. It is speculated that the variable, LOC, is significant in understanding the nature of the learning process of an individual in different learning environments. This variable also helps in understanding the degree to which an individual conceives personal control as an internal or external locus of control of reinforcement. Social learning theory provides the general theoretical background for this concept of reinforcement **(Rotter, 1966)**.

Happiness is another variable used in this study. It is defined as "a state of well-being and contentment; a pleasurable or satisfying experience" (**Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 2009**). The research on personality traits, has been growing for the past two decades, shifting the paradigm from the study of the negative side of human traits to attitudes of positive personality characteristics like happiness, creativity and locus of control (**Pannells & Claxton, 2008**). For many decades, the research on happiness remained neglected. As happiness is a state of positive emotions, studies in this area are important because emotions are essential to broaden the students' thoughtful action, based on the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (**Fredrickson, 2004**). The theory elucidates that positive emotions such as joy and contentment, which are happiness states, allow individual to become resilient. A few research studies in education, with regard to happiness (**Michalos, 2007 and Seligman, 2009**), show that the movement of studying the positive elements of students is essential. Happiness is positively correlated with academic performance (**Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002**). This establishes that happy students will obtain a good grade in their academics and strive for a great career when the students are happily calibrated.

Argyle (2001) demonstrates a direct relationship between internal locus of control and happiness. Similarly, longitudinal study suggested a significant correlation between happiness and internal locus of control, to strengthen over time (**Lu, 1997**). Although developed countries such as United States, United Kingdom, Europe and various Asian nations, have registered a positive advance in education, India received very limited exposure in higher education, particularly in management foundations (**Seligman, 2009; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005**). Studies in students' happiness, have been sidelined because there are implications that those researchers who conduct the subject fields

in positive areas, were not claimed as serious scientists (**Segerstrom, 2006**). In pursuing the concept of a greater nation in terms of development and strength capability, it is no doubt that the creation of the country's future rests in its education scheme. Considering these needs, this exploratory study focused on investigating the relationships that might exist between students' LOC orientation and happiness in India.

2. Literature Review

Happiness: The definitions of happiness are complex and controversial. The complications regarding happiness, crop up due to the understanding the term and confusion between happiness and other positive emotions (**Haidt, 2006**). However, happiness can be defined as the degree to which an individual judges the quality of his life as satisfying life (**Veenhoven, 1992**). Over the past two decades, the concept of happiness has been given a lot of importance by researchers across disciplines. Psychologists, economists, and sociologists have made an exceptional achievement, in deciding the best measures of happiness, ways to enhance happiness and why happiness is valuable (**Diener and Chan, 2011**). Students constitute a substantial number of the society. Happiness is one of the fundamental concepts and components of an individual's life, especially to the students. Different divisions of learning, including positive psychology, try to understand and facilitate happiness in individual's life. Happiness has three main elements: positive emotions, life satisfaction and absence of negative emotions such as illness, anger and depression.

Research has found that happiness and education are closely related (**Nell Nodings, 2004**). Students' objective should be to strive for lifelong learning. However, in many situations, the focus is on getting good grades rather than continuous learning. This approach might create an ongoing tension for teachers as

traditional teachers quietly accepted authority in lectures but in reality, the objective of teachers is to encourage students to accept lifelong learning. This requires a changeover in teaching, readiness to accept changes and a new paradigm in teaching and learning for both teachers and students. **Seligman (2002)** has pointed out that happy people are more willing to accept and to give new ideas, which indicates that students, who are happy, are more willing to engage and undertake difficult tasks, thinking deeply about issues and develop new solutions as happiness is an emotion which is important in learning.

Locus of control: The construct 'locus of control' was developed by **Julian Rotter (1966)**. This concept was borrowed from the concept of reinforcement which established that if the outcomes of behavior by an individual are favorable or unfavorable, then the tendency of the individual to behave in a particular way in the future is increased or decreased, depending upon positive or negative reinforcement. Reinforcement strengthens the behavior of an individual and the same behavior will be repeated to similar reinforcement in the future. This anticipation of reinforcement is regarded as expectancy. With the development of this expectancy, individuals learn to distinguish behaviors and outcomes and generalize these anticipations for the future. This universality of expectancies of control of reinforcements defines and specifies one's locus of control (**Rotter, Seeman & Liverant, 1962**).

Individuals, with orientation of external locus of control, consider that their behaviors or their abilities make no variation in obtaining reinforcement and do not value the accomplishments. Such individuals have less confidence that they could control the outcomes of behaviors in the present or future. Individuals, with the orientation of internal locus of control, consider that they have strong control on the outcomes of the behaviors. Students, who think that their inadequate performance is caused by elements out of their control, are unlikely to see any reasons to hope for improvement. In contrast, students who attribute their inadequate performance to poor study habits or lack of skills, are more likely to persist in the future. In other words, students, with an external locus of control, are more likely to react to failure by giving up hope and not trying harder whereas those, with an internal locus of control, are likely to respond to failure by trying harder to improve (**Anderman & Midgley, 1998**).

Several research groups, including positive psychology, attempt to apply the scientific method to answer the question about what happiness is and what the correlates of happiness are. Happiness is defined as the degree to which a person judges the quality of his life as satisfying life (**Veenhoven, R. 1992**). On that point, there are some social and psychological constructs to help people to achieve that. One of those constructs is internal LOC. It is observed that individuals, with internal LOC, believe that the outcomes of their behavior are under their own control, are happier with their life compared with the individuals who have external LOC, who believe that the outcomes of their behavior are controlled by external factors such as chance or luck. Many studies have recorded positive correlation between internal LOC and happiness. **Lu and Shin, 1997, Myers and Diener, 1995**, **Dicle, 2008 & Yukura et al., 1993** concluded that individuals, who had internal LOC orientation, were happier in comparison with those who were governed by external Locus of Control.

3. Statement of the Problem

There are over 200 universities, 8000 colleges, 7 million students and 27,000 teachers in Higher Education in India. India faces challenges to develop the country into a knowledge-based economy. **Letseka and Maile (2008)** argued that higher educational institutions are under pressure, to increase

academic performance and lessen dropout proportions. With these burdens, tied with the current dull reality, students within the higher educational environment are experiencing reduced levels of overall happiness and an increase in mood sicknesses **(Noddings, 2003; WHO, 2011)**. This decline in perceived happiness, may result in poorer academic performance, greater dropout rates and lessened study engagement **(Howell, 2009; Ouweneel, LeBlanc, & Schaufeli, 2011)**. It is so important to develop interventions, intended to promote student happiness, so as to build a defense against the incidence of these pathologies and to increase academic performance **(Howell, 2009)**. Past research recommends that happy students are more motivated to perform, show higher levels of general health and lower levels of depression and have been shown to achieve better academically **(Howell, 2009; Seligman, 2009)**. Although few studies have been conducted, to test the relationship between locus of control and happiness of an individual in developed countries like the United States and United Kingdom, this kind of studies were ignored in developing countries like India, especially in higher education, with management foundations. Hence this study examines the relationship between locus of control and happiness, with reference to gender.

4. Objectives of the Study

The present study has the following key objectives.

➢ To study the relationship between locus of control and happiness among students in India.

➢ To examine whether the relationship between locus of control and happiness is conditional upon student gender.

5. Hypotheses of the Study

The hypotheses of the study were framed as follows:

$H_0 1$: There is no association between locus of control and happiness among postgraduate students.

$H_0 2$: The relationship between locus of control and happiness is not conditional upon gender, i.e., the relationship is the same for males and females.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Sample Selection

The study participants were selected from a top rated, B-school in the country. All the selected participants were pursuing their post graduation in Business Management. First, the study participants were invited to participate in a survey. Once the students accepted to participate, they were given a survey questionnaire, consisting of survey objectives, study constructs, and demographics. All the participants were given 15 minutes to complete the survey. This process resulted in the generation of 300 completed survey responses.

6.2 Data Collection

Data were collected from 300 postgraduate students, through survey questionnaires.

6.3 Period of Study

The period, considered for the study, was from June 2014 to May 2015.

6.4 Measures Used in the Study

The question items, used to measure Students' Happiness, were taken from Oxford Happiness Inventory **(Argyle et al., 1989)** and the items, used to measure students' LOC, were adapted from **Rotter's (1966)**.

6.5 Tools Used for the Study

SPSS software was used to analyze the data. Factor analysis, correlation, inter-correlation and t-test were used to test the hypotheses.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to finding out the impact of one construct, LOC, from core self evaluation, on happiness. Other three constructs, neuroticism, self efficacy and self esteem were not studied. The sample considered only Postgraduate Students of Business Management, from June 2014 to May 2015.

7. Correlation Analysis

Statistical analysis was performed by using Pearson's Correlation Test and independent 't' test. **Table-1** shows the results of statistical analysis, of Cronbach's coefficient alpha to measure the reliability of the instruments. Although the instruments were proven to be reliable and they were being used for the past many years, reliability tests were needed for this study since the instruments were used in a different culture, at a different span of time. An internal consistency estimate was calculated for the two instruments and the Cronbach's alpha value, for Locus of Control and Happiness, were 0.738 and 0.832 respectively. According to the **Table-4,** a significant positive correlation was found between happiness and locus of control ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$). Hence, **Ho1** was rejected. To examine, $H_0 2$, data were divided into two subsets, based on their gender. According to **Table No. 2 and 3**, the results did not support any association between locus of control and student happiness, conditional upon gender (males: $r = .30$, $p > 0.05$; females $r = 0.32$, $p > 0.05$). Based on this finding, **$H_0 2$** was accepted and gender was not considered a conditional factor between locus of control and student happiness. The findings in this study are consistent with **Fajita et al., (1991)** who reported that women experienced more negative effect than men but happiness score was consistent and women were as happy as men but more intense. Only 1% of variance in happiness score was explained by gender differences.

8. Findings and Suggestions

Strong significant positive correlation was found between happiness and locus of control ($r = 0,60$, $p < 0.01$). Postgraduate students, with internal locus of control, were found to be more happy than students with external locus of control. Further, the data were divided into two subsets, based on the respondents' gender. The examination of the results revealed that there was no association between locus of control and student happiness, for both males and females (males: $r = .30$, $p > 0.05$; females $r = 0.32$, $p > 0.05$). Based on this finding, it can be inferred that gender is not a conditional factor between locus of control and student happiness.

9. Conclusion

The current study explored the association between LOC and happiness among post graduate students of India. The findings confirmed that there was significant positive relationship between LOC and happiness among students in India. There are many social and biological factors, determining the level of happiness, like psychological and personality factors such as LOC which make people happy and enjoy mental wellness. Living a more delightful and happy life is directly dependent on the orientation of LOC. Women have more intense positive emotion which buffers their negative effect.The result of locus of control and gender differences is also consistent with previous literature. According to **Maccoby and Jackline (1974)**, females generally show more external locus of control than their male counterpart (**Table-3**).Our results are also in accordance with the previous literature, showing there was positive correlation between internal locus of control and happiness score.

10. Scope for Future Research

The study addressed the impact of only one construct, LOC, from the core self evaluation on happiness. The combination of other three constructs, neuroticism, self efficacy and self

esteem of core self evaluation, may provide a holistic outcome of the study. Therefore, a comprehensive study, with all the four variables, can be conducted. The study targeted the students of age between 19-25 years and hence the findings could not be generalized. It is suggested to the postgraduate students, to develop an internal locus of control, to attain more happiness.

11. Acknowledgement

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Table-1: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic
Internal LOC	174	2	19	11.03	.388	3.335
Happiness Score	175	2.8600	5.3700	4.262	.066305	.5742193

Source: Computed by the Researcher

Table-2: Genderwise Descriptive Statistics of Happiness score

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Happiness Score (For Male)	79	2.8600	5.2700	4.287538	.6005502
Happiness Score (For Female)	96	3.1000	5.3700	4.259914	.5407872

Source: Computed by the Researcher

Table-3: Gender wise Descriptive Statistics of LOC

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internal LOC (Male)	79	2	19	11.36	3.688
Internal LOC (Female)	96	4	17	10.66	2.900

Source: Computed by the Researcher

Table-4: Correlation between Happiness Score and LOC

		H. Score	LOC
	Pearson Correlation	1	.721
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.009
	N	175	174

Source: Computed by the Researcher