

Locus of Control and Readiness to Change Amongst Indian College Students

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative study aims to investigate the relationship between locus of control and readiness to change among Indian college students. A sample of 178 students was collected using Rotter's internal-external locus of control and the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment and analyzed through Spearman's rank-order correlation in SPSS. The study revealed a non-significant association between the two constructs ($\rho = .066$, $p > 0.05$), indicating a complex interplay influenced by cultural intricacies, personal values, and societal dynamics. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive interventions tailored to the nuanced nature of personality traits and behavioral intentions within collectivistic cultures like India.

Keywords: Locus of Control, Readiness to Change, Indian college students

INTRODUCTION

Locus of control refers to an individual's perception of his or her ability to exercise control over the environment (Chen & Wang, 2007). Rotter (1996) has defined locus of control as "the degree to which a person perceives an outcome as being contingent on their own actions or those of external forces" and has classified the construct into two. An individual is considered to have an external locus of control when he feels that reinforcement that follows an action is dependent on no other source but fate, luck, or other powerful forces rather than his own actions. On the other hand, when someone believes that their traits influence and determine the event and its reinforcements, they have an internal locus of control (Matricardi, 2006). The social learning theory of Bandura (1977) highlighted the significance of

examining and modeling the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions of others. The theory explains human behavior in terms of continuous reciprocal interaction between cognitive, behavioral, and environmental influences (Padró, 2007). The central concept of Bandura's social cognitive theory is self-efficacy, which expresses people's beliefs about their capacity to achieve particular performance levels and exert control over life-affecting events (Gajendran & Nagle, 2016). Locus of control is connected with self-efficacy as people with high self-efficacy significantly have internal locus of control and low efficacy responsible to develop external locus of control. Males show more internal locus of control and females show more external locus of control (Haider and Naeem, 2013).

Culture plays a pivotal role in molding an individual's locus of control beliefs. For instance, minority cohorts such as African Americans, Spanish Americans, and Native Americans tend to exhibit a predilection towards an external locus of control, a trend attributed to multifaceted societal and historical influences (Lefcourt, 1976).

Research suggests that differences in locus of control dimensions are influenced by cultural factors, particularly the distinction between collectivistic and individualistic societies. Individuals from collectivistic cultures typically exhibit a greater reliance on external sources of control, such as powerful figures or chance events, compared to their counterparts in individualistic cultures (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

In therapeutic settings, a comprehensive understanding of clients' locus of control orientations within their cultural contexts holds paramount significance. By acknowledging and validating external influences such as systemic oppression, colonial legacies, and social determinants of health, therapists can facilitate clients' development of a nuanced comprehension of their agency and potential for transformative change (Collins, 2018). This recognition underscores the intricate interplay between individual psychological processes and broader socio-cultural dynamics, thereby enriching therapeutic approaches with cultural sensitivity and relevance.

Alongside cultural factors, sociodemographic factors like gender, educational background, and age have also been studied. Verma et al.'s (2017) study among young adults reveals nuanced gender dynamics, suggesting comparable external locus of control between men and women but with women demonstrating slightly higher internal control. Similarly, D'souza et al. (2014) highlight variations in locus of control across demographic groups, with men, Generation X, and postgraduates exhibiting stronger internal control tendencies.

The Indian philosophical perspective encompasses three core tenets shared across its six systems (Dasgupta, 1922/1991; Prabhavananda, 1960). One of them is a firm adherence to the karma theory, positing that all deeds exert a consequential influence, determining future joy or sorrow contingent upon their moral quality. Studies have revealed a strong correlation between belief in karma and convictions regarding the existence of a divine entity and the fairness of the cosmos, indicative of an external locus of control (Agrawal & Dalal, 1993; Khanna & Khanna, 1979).

In India, individuals adhere to seven pan-Indian cultural characteristics that transcend geographical boundaries. These characteristics encompass a collectivist orientation, respect for status and power, primacy of personalized relationships, inclination towards group affiliation, familial bonds, context-sensitive behavior, and a skeptical perspective towards others. Such traits substantiate the widely acknowledged notion of cultural diversity within the country (Panda et al., 2004). Locus of control within Indian contexts is heavily influenced by collectivistic factors, notably the emphasis on familial, communal, and hierarchical structures. Consequently, individuals may exhibit an external locus of control, perceiving their destiny as determined by external influences such as familial expectations, societal norms, or even chance occurrences.

In terms of psychiatric practice, much of it, in both India and globally is heavily influenced by Western concepts of mental health and illness, primarily developed with individuals possessing an internal locus of control in mind, as commonly found in Western societies. Unfortunately, these frameworks often overlook the significance of factors such as religion, family dynamics, Eastern philosophies, and traditional medicine in comprehending and addressing psychiatric disorders. In Indian contexts, coping mechanisms often involve relinquishing responsibility to a higher authority, typically God, thus alleviating the

individual from burdensome personal responsibilities. This external locus of control, widely accepted and ingrained in Indian culture, stands in sharp contrast to the Western emphasis on individual autonomy and self-reliance in problem-solving (Avasthi et al., 2013).

Holt et al., (2007) describes readiness to change as “the extent to which an individual or individuals are cognitively and emotionally inclined to accept, embrace, and adopt a particular plan to purposefully alter the status quo”.

Parallels have also been drawn between change readiness and Lewin’s (1951) construct of unfreezing which is also reflected in the individual’s beliefs, attitudes and intentions with regards to the degree to which changes are necessary and the capacity to successfully implement the said changes (Armenakis et al., 1993).

The readiness to change and its progression are influenced by various factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and problem-solving skills, prompting researchers to connect transtheoretical models with this construct (Carroll et al., 2012). One such model, proposed by Prochaska and DiClemente (1982), delineates the different stages that an individual uses to bring about a change in a behavior: precontemplation, contemplation, action, and maintenance. Individuals may advance or regress through these stages, drawing upon past experiences that may still offer valuable insights for change (Ceccarini et al., 2015; Carroll et al., 2012).

As per Hofstede’s (1991) framework, India exhibits distinct collectivistic characteristics, with a relatively high score of 48 on this dimension. In collectivistic societies, there is a heightened emphasis on group harmony, adherence to social norms, and interdependence. Individuals are expected to prioritize the welfare of their defined in-groups (István, 2014). Consequently, the readiness to change may be more influenced by social factors and collective objectives rather than individual perceptions of control. In such cultural

contexts, individuals often rely on social support networks and communal decision-making processes rather than feeling personally accountable for instigating change based on their locus of control. Furthermore, India exhibits the highest Hofstede (1991) dimension for the culture, with a Power Distance ranking of 77 compared to a world average of 56.5 (István, 2014). This underlines a significant level of inequality concerning power and wealth within the society. India’s entrenched Caste System further accentuates this inequality by dividing the population into five groups, each with a higher status than the one below it. The pervasive influence of high power distance within the caste system deeply molds societal norms and behaviors, thereby impacting the readiness to change.

A study in Sehore district of India evaluated the applicability of the readiness for change model among Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), a group of community health workers in India, specifically focusing on their involvement in mental health task-sharing. The research employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews with ASHAs, using open-ended questions to explore various factors influencing their readiness for change. These factors included attitudes towards their role in mental health care, perception of capability to implement task-sharing, and support from the public health system. The data analysis followed a framework analysis approach, utilizing both inductive and deductive methods to identify key themes. Participants identified three main themes relevant to task-sharing among ASHAs: change valence (the perceived value of task-sharing), change efficacy (confidence in implementing task-sharing), and job valence (the value attributed to their regular job role). Moreover, participants shared insights into culturally and contextually significant aspects of these factors. Major themes highlighted in the study encompassed personal empowerment, gaining community respect and trust, fulfilling professional duties, relationships with supervisors, and challenges related to

resource availability. This qualitative exploration represents the first attempt to understand the readiness for change model and its culture- and context-specific nuances among non-specialist health workers in India. It sheds light on the complexities involved in implementing mental health task-sharing initiatives within this cadre (Dev et al., 2022).

There have been studies linking locus of control and readiness to change to alcohol use. For example, Bhowmick et al. (2019) looked at the relationship between patients' readiness to change and their locus of control related to drinking, in connection to the severity of alcohol dependency in a cross-sectional study. Of the 162 individuals evaluated, 25.9% showed mild alcohol dependence, 51.90% showed moderate alcohol dependence, and 22.20% showed severe alcohol dependence. The results indicated that patients with high alcohol dependence, who tended to score higher on the locus of control scale related to drinking, may lean towards an external locus of control.

The variables have also been studied in relation to organizational attitudes. In a study conducted at the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility in the Gaza Strip, researchers aimed to explore employee attitudes towards readiness to change, with locus of control as a key influencing factor. The study hypothesized a positive correlation between internal locus of control and favorable attitudes towards organizational change. Elias (2009) suggested that individuals exhibiting internality of control, perceive themselves as having more influence over change events and are less likely to experience negative repercussions linked with an external locus of control. The study's results supported this hypothesis, revealing a significant correlation ($r = 0.196$) between internal locus of control and positive attitudes towards organizational change (El-Farra & Badawi, 2012).

Locus of control and readiness to change are fundamental components of broader

theoretical frameworks explaining decision-making processes. In a quantitative study conducted by Zerulik (2012), the investigation focused on exploring the potential relationship between locus of control and readiness to change within the framework of the college disciplinary process. The results revealed that there was no significant relationship observed between locus of control and readiness to change within the context of the college disciplinary process. Several factors could account for this absence. It's possible that a relationship exists but wasn't evident in this particular sample. Alternatively, the relationship might not be applicable within the specific context of the college disciplinary process. Lastly, it's plausible that no inherent relationship exists between these two constructs overall. Individual differences, personal traits, and attitudes are recognized as antecedents of individual attitudes towards change. (Rafferty et al., 2013). Furthermore, it has been suggested that a person's locus of control is a dispositional element that can indicate whether or not they are adaptable. According to Mujib and Rosari (2023), there has been a lack of consistency in the results of several research studies that have looked at the relationship between locus of control and a positive attitude towards change, including readiness to change. The existing research on locus of control focuses on clinical and neuropsychological implications. However, the mundane population is ignored and its interrelationship with other cognitive aspects like readiness to change we observe similar patterns where in major researches are done on organizational population. Therefore, in this study we aim to cover these research gaps.

MATERIALS & METHODS

Statement of the Problem

This research aims to investigate the association between locus of control and readiness to change among Indian college students. By examining this relationship within the specific cultural context of India,

the study seeks to understand if, and how, cultural factors might influence the strength and direction of this association. Understanding these complexities can provide valuable insights for promoting positive change and development tailored to the unique needs of Indian college students.

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to investigate the relationship between locus of control and readiness to change among Indian college students.

Participants

The study employed a convenient snowball sampling method in order to recruit participants. A total of 178 responses were received (153- females, 25- males), average age range of the participants were 18-25 and over 60% of participants studied in a private institution.

Tools

Rotter's internal external locus of control: The scale assesses the subject's attributions (internal vs. external) for the outcomes of his or her behavior (Rotter, 1966). The measure consists of 29 choice items, with each item consisting of an external belief and an internal belief. The scale possesses a fairly high test-retest reliability (.72) and good discriminant validity as supported by low correlations with intelligence, social desirability, and political liberalism (Lester & Bishop, 1997). A total score is computed for the participant's external beliefs. A high score, (greater or equal to 12) represents a high external locus of control. A lower the score, (less than 12) represents a more internal locus of control (Matricardi, 2006).

University of Rhode Island Change Assessment: The scale is a 32-item self-report measure that includes four subscales measuring Prochaska and Di Clemente's TTM SOC: Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Action, and Maintenance (Prochaska and Velicer, 1997). Responses

are given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strong disagreement) to 5 (strong agreement). Internal consistency coefficient was calculated for each subscale with pre-contemplation and contemplation having alpha value of 0.88 each, action having alpha value of 0.89 and maintenance having alpha value of 0.88 (McConaughy et al., 1983 ; Ceccarini et al., 2015).

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

This study strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines of the American Psychological Association (APA). Before participation, informed consent was obtained from all participants, emphasizing the study's aims, procedures, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of involvement. The right to withdraw at any time was clearly communicated. All data was anonymized and stored securely to protect participant confidentiality.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Following data collection, all responses were entered and organized in Microsoft Excel 2019. Prior to statistical analysis, several procedures were undertaken to ensure data quality. First, data were carefully reviewed and duplicate responses were identified and removed. Second, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the sample characteristics and examine central tendency and variability for the study variables. Third, normality of data distribution and homogeneity of variance were assessed to ensure the appropriateness of planned statistical tests.

The primary statistical software employed for data analysis was IBM SPSS Statistics 21(hereafter referred to as SPSS). Considering the research question and the level of measurement of the variables (assumed to be ordinal), Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient (commonly referred to as Pearson's correlation) was utilized to examine the potential association between locus of control and readiness to change.

RESULT

Table 1: showing the descriptive statistics for Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale and University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) Scale

	Locus of Control	Readiness to Change
Mean	12.9551	104.1742
Std. Deviation	3.22389	14.66569

The descriptive statistics for Rotter's Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (1966), and the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment (URICA) Scale (1989) were analysed to understand participants' attributions for the outcomes of their behavior and their readiness to change (RTC). The mean score for Rotter's Locus of Control was 12.9551 (SD = 3.22389), indicating that, on average, participants exhibited a tendency towards an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). This average situates the sample just above the threshold for high external control, suggesting a general tendency among participants to attribute their behaviors' outcomes to external factors. For the URICA scale, the mean score reported was 104.1742 (SD = 14.66569), positioning the average participant's readiness to change as high, given that this score exceeds the threshold of 80 for high readiness to change (McConnaughy et al., 1989). The variability in scores, as indicated by the standard deviation, suggests a broad range of RTC among participants, reflecting diverse stages of readiness for change.

Table 2: showing Spearman's Rank correlation between Locus of Control and Readiness to Change

	Locus of Control	Readiness to Change
Locus of Control	1	
Readiness to Change	0.066	1

A Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis ($\rho = .066, p > 0.05$) did not reveal a statistically significant association between locus of control and readiness to change. Spearman's rank-order is a non-parametric test suitable for assessing monotonic relationships between two

variables. This implies that the observed correlation is likely due to chance, and there is no evidence to support a genuine association between locus of control and readiness to change.

DISCUSSION

A quantitative survey examined the relationship between locus of control and readiness to change among Indian college students. The study explores the concept of locus of control, originally defined by Rotter (1966). As defined by Rotter (1966), reflects the extent to which individuals perceive they influence or determine their life outcomes. Those with an internal locus of control attribute outcomes to their own actions, while those with an external locus of control view outcomes as determined by external forces. The study's findings align with prior research, revealing a trend towards an external locus of control among participants. This supports the notion that cultural and societal factors significantly influence locus of control beliefs (Padro, 2007; Wang et al., 2023).

Corroborating the influence of cultural and societal factors on locus of control (Rotter, 1966), existing literature underscores this relationship (Padro, 2007; Wang et al., 2023). Padro (2007) emphasizes how historical and societal contexts shape external locus of control beliefs, particularly among minority groups. This resonates with the collectivistic and hierarchical nature of Indian society, where emphasis on social order and deference to authority figures might contribute to external control perceptions. A notion pertinent to the Indian backdrop, marked by collectivism and a hierarchical social order. Concurrently, Wang et al. (2023) explored the effects of rising individualism on locus of control, positing that enhanced individualistic tendencies do not straightforwardly equate to a shift towards internal control perceptions. This insight complements the current study's findings, illustrating that the ascendancy of individualistic values in India does not necessarily translate into altered

locus of control perceptions among Indian college students.

Diverging perspectives, such as those proposed by Hofstede (1980, 1991) and D'Souza & Upasna Usha (2014), offer a broader lens through which to examine cultural influences on personality traits like locus of control. Hofstede's (1980) framework of national culture posits that collectivistic societies scoring high on power distance and uncertainty avoidance dimensions might cultivate external locus of control beliefs. This stems from the cultural emphasis on respecting authority figures and adhering to established social norms (Hofstede, 1980, 1991).

However, the current study's findings challenge this notion to some extent. Despite observing a tendency towards external locus of control among participants, the study also reveals a high readiness to change. This suggests that factors beyond mere locus of control, such as personal aspirations or societal pressures for improvement, might influence an individual's willingness to embrace change.

Expanding on the multifaceted nature of cultural influences, research by Singh et al. (1990) and Verma et al. (2017) explores the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity within the Indian context. Their findings highlight the intricate interplay between cultural norms and individual characteristics in shaping locus of control beliefs. While overarching cultural values undoubtedly exert a significant influence, these studies demonstrate that subcultural variations and individual differences can lead to diverse outcomes (Singh et al., 1990; Verma et al., 2017). This complexity likely contributes to the observed variability in readiness to change among participants in the present study. The spectrum of readiness levels exhibited by the participants suggests that locus of control alone might not be a sufficient predictor of an individual's willingness to change.

Employing Spearman's rank-order correlation analysis, the present study revealed a non-significant association

between locus of control and readiness to change. This suggests a more intricate relationship between these constructs, potentially influenced by a confluence of factors. Cultural nuances, individual value systems, and ongoing societal transformations might all play a role (Padro, 2007; Wang et al., 2023). This aligns with the broader scholarly consensus acknowledging the multifaceted nature of personality traits and behavioral intentions (Rotter, 1966). Consequently, interventions designed to foster change within collectivistic cultures like India may need to consider a more comprehensive range of influences, extending beyond a singular focus on locus of control.

Bhowmick et al. (2019) establish a direct link to the current study. Their research examines locus of control in relation to readiness to change, specifically within the context of alcohol dependence syndrome. This close thematic alignment strengthens the current investigation's findings, offering further evidence for the complex interplay between locus of control and behavioral change intentions. This aligns with the assertion that readiness to change, while influenced by locus of control, may also be driven by personal motivations and societal pressures for improvement.

Despite the absence of a direct correlation between locus of control and readiness to change, this study offers valuable insights into the nuanced relationship between these constructs within the Indian cultural context. The findings resonate with the broader academic discourse that emphasizes the multifaceted nature of personality and behavior, shaped by a confluence of cultural, societal, and individual factors (Rotter, 1966). This emphasizes the critical need for interventions that move beyond a singular focus on locus of control and instead adopt a more tailored approach that considers the complex interplay between cultural identity, personal belief systems, and behavioral intentions.

CONCLUSION

The present quantitative survey conducted among Indian college students aimed to explore the relationship between locus of control and readiness to change, utilizing Rotter's internal external locus of control and the University of Rhode Island Change Assessment. Gathering 178 responses and meticulously collecting consent and data from each participant, the analysis using Spearman's rank-order correlation in SPSS revealed a non-significant association between the two constructs ($\rho = .066$, $p > 0.05$). This implies a complex interplay between locus of control and readiness to change, suggesting that factors beyond individual traits may be at play. Cultural intricacies, personal values, and societal dynamics could all influence this relationship, as noted by prior research (Padro, 2007; Wang et al., 2023).

The findings underscore the nuanced nature of personality traits and behavioral intentions within collectivistic cultures like India, necessitating a comprehensive approach to interventions aimed at fostering change. Acknowledging the multifaceted influences on readiness to change, interventions should go beyond a singular focus on locus of control. Instead, they should encompass broader societal transformations and individual value systems. This aligns with the scholarly consensus, as highlighted by Rotter (1966), emphasizing the importance of considering diverse factors in understanding and promoting behavioral change within cultural contexts.

Limitations

While the study offers valuable insights, limitations inherent to the methodology warrant consideration. The snowball sampling technique, chosen for its practicality, may introduce a potential selection bias. As a non-probability sampling method, it restricts the generalizability of the findings to the wider population of Indian college students.

Furthermore, India's rich tapestry of cultures, languages, and social norms necessitates caution in generalizing the results. Locus of control and readiness to change might be significantly influenced by regional variations and cultural backgrounds (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). The current study's focus on a specific cultural context highlights the need for further research exploring these constructs across India's diverse landscape.

Additionally, the study's examination of locus of control and readiness to change in isolation limits the understanding of the complex interplay between psychological variables. Integrating other psychological constructs, such as anxiety, depression, or stress levels, could offer a more holistic perspective on the factors influencing readiness to change.

Despite these limitations, the study sheds light on the significant influence of cultural factors within the Indian context on locus of control and readiness to change. It underscores the importance of acknowledging cultural nuances in psychological research and contributes to the theoretical understanding of these constructs, particularly in non-Western contexts.

Implications and Future research directions

The study's observation of a predominant external locus of control among participants presents valuable implications for educational and psychological interventions in India. Considering this cultural orientation, programs designed to cultivate self-efficacy and foster an internal locus of control could prove beneficial (Bandura, 1986). Such interventions may empower Indian college students to adopt a more proactive approach in tackling personal and academic challenges.

For mental health professionals and counsellors working with this population, understanding the cultural underpinnings of locus of control beliefs is paramount. By incorporating these cultural nuances into

counselling approaches, professionals can facilitate more effective support for students navigating life transitions and difficulties. Recognizing the influence of societal and cultural factors on these orientations can inform the development of more inclusive and supportive educational and social systems, ultimately contributing to more effective policy decisions.

Future research endeavours could benefit from adopting interdisciplinary approaches that integrate insights from psychology, sociology, and anthropology. This collaborative approach has the potential to deepen our understanding of the intricate interplay between individual beliefs, cultural norms, and societal structures. Investigating the impact of digital and social media on locus of control and readiness to change could offer valuable insights into the contemporary influences shaping these constructs among young adults.

Furthermore, future studies would be strengthened by considering additional variables that may influence or interact with locus of control and readiness to change. These might include stress levels, the nature and strength of social support networks, personality traits, and mental health status. Exploring these multifaceted relationships will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complex factors shaping individual change processes.

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