

# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOCUS OF CONTROL AND COPING STRATEGIES AMONG SCHOOL GOING ADOLESCENTS

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To examine the relationship between Locus of Control (LOC) and Coping strategies among school going adolescents. **Method:** 300 schools going adolescents (male=150, female=150) of 11 years to 16 years attending high school were selected using stratified random sampling technique. Locus of Control Scale and Coping Check List were administered to assess the locus of control and coping strategies of the study samples respectively. **Results:** Results indicated that there was no significant relationship between problem focussed coping strategy and the LOC ( $p$ -value = 0.677). A significant relationship existed between Emotion focussed coping Strategy and the different dimensions of LOC ( $p$ -value= 0.002) as well as between Social Support coping strategies with respect to the three different dimensions of LOC ( $p$ -value= 0.001). **Conclusion:** The findings of the present study revealed that adolescents having External Locus of Control used Emotion Focussed coping strategies more than the adolescents having Internal and Intermediate Locus of Control. Also, adolescents having Internal Locus of Control used Social Support coping strategies more than the adolescents having External and Intermediate Locus of Control.

**Index Terms:** Locus of control, coping strategy, adolescents

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period hallmarked by rapid physical development (e.g., the attainment of sexual maturity) as well as dramatic psychosocial changes (e.g., becoming more autonomous from parents, initiating romantic relationships). Due to these closely intertwined changes, diverse age-specific normative stressors emerge, which have to be accomplished in order to overcome adolescence with relative ease (Berk, 2003; Lerner, 2002). They experience demands for coping skills and adaptations to an unprecedented rate of social change and are best by multiple pressures, temptations, and perceived barriers to which they are compelled to respond and simultaneously maintain a sense of self with intact boundaries and an emerging sense of presence and focus in the adult environment (Nwankwo et.al, 2012). According to Deci and Ryan (2000) adolescents are centrally concerned with motivation – how to move themselves or others to act. They are often moved by external factors such as reward systems, grades evaluations or the opinions they fear others might have of them. Nevertheless, adolescents frequently are motivated from within by interests, curiosity, and abiding values.

Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe they can control events affecting them. Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality studies. Rotter (1966) stated that a person's "locus" (Latin for "place" or "location") is conceptualized as either internal or external. It is the perceived source of control over the behavior. It is the degree to which individuals feel they have control over outcomes.

*Internal locus of control:* Individuals with a strong internal locus of control believe that events in their life derive primarily from their own actions: for example, when receiving test results, people with an internal locus of control tend to praise or blame themselves and their abilities.

*External locus of control:* Individuals with a high external locus of control believe that fate or chance determine the outcome of events (Carlson, 2007). Externals attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances.

*Intermediate locus of control or bi-local:* People that have the combination of the two types of locus of control are often referred to as Bi-locals. They can take personal responsibility for their actions and the consequences thereof while remaining capable of relying upon and having faith in outside resources; these characteristics correspond to the internal and external loci of control, respectively (Rotter, 1975).

Weiten and Lloyd (2008) conceptualized coping as purposeful responses that are directed toward resolving the stressful relationship between the self and the environment or toward palliating negative emotions that arise as a result of stress. It is viewed as an on-going dynamic process that changes in response to the changing demands of a stressful encounter or event.

*Problem-focused coping:* Problem-focused coping has as its goal the resolution of the underlying problem. Problem-focused coping involves such responses as seeking information, generating possible solutions to a problem, and taking actions to change the circumstances that are creating stress. People using problem-focused strategies try to deal with the cause of their problem (Carver et.al, 2010).

*Emotion-focused coping:* The goal of emotion-focused coping is the attenuation of negative emotions associated with the stressor. Emotion-focused coping involves such responses as expressing one's emotions, seeking solace and support from others, and trying to avoid the source of stress (Compas et.al, 1999). The focus of this coping mechanism is to change the meaning of the stressor or transfer attention away from it.

## OBJECTIVE

To study the relationship between Locus of Control and Coping strategies among school going adolescents

## METHODOLOGY

### Sampling Method

Two-stage sampling method was adopted as sampling procedure. In the first stage, adolescents from three English medium co-educational schools situated in Imphal area of Manipur were selected through simple sampling technique. Secondly, stratified random sampling technique was used. In this process, the samples were stratified into two strata on the basis of male adolescents and female adolescents. From each of the school, 100 students (50 each for both male and female adolescents) were drawn as the sample of the study.

### Inclusion Criteria

1. Adolescents between the age range of 10 to 18 years
2. Educational qualification – 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> standard
3. Adolescents willing to participate in the study
4. Able to give parental consent

### Exclusion Criteria

No history of head injury or head trauma, severe mental illness and mental retardation

### Procedure of Data Collection

Necessary permission was taken from the concerned authorities of the schools and they were explained thoroughly about the research that is to be carried out. Thorough information about the research was shared to all the participants who were willing to give assent and parent's consent in the present study. Once the assent and consent were obtained, the participants were assessed using Locus of Control scale to measure one's belief about whether events are controlled internally or externally and Coping Check List was employed for assessing the coping strategies.

### Tools

- 1) **Locus of Control scale** is a personality dimension scale developed by Stephen Nowicki and Marshall Duke (1974) in order to remedy some technical problems that were characteristic of the original Rotter (1966) scale. This scale measures one's belief about whether events are controlled internally or externally.
- 2) **Coping Check List**, by Rao et.al (1989) is a self-report inventory comprising 70 items, which covers a wide range of behavioural, cognitive and emotional response to handle stress. Items are scored dichotomously in a yes/no format, the responses indicating presence or absence of a particular coping behaviour.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table No. 1**

**Mean and Standard Deviation of Problem Focussed Coping Strategy among different categories of Locus of Control**

Locus of Control	Mean	Standard Deviation	f-value	p-value	Remark
Internal	7.41	1.625	0.390	0.677	Insignificant
Intermediate	7.55	1.735			
External	7.35	1.430			

**Table no. 1:** It was observed from the table that the mean of internal LOC, external LOC and Intermediate LOC were 7.41, 7.35 and 7.55, respectively. Statistically, when applied ANOVA test, it was found that there was no significant relationship between problem focus and the LOC (p-value = 0.677). This was in contradiction to the results of DeMello and Imms (1999) wherein external locus of control was negatively related to problem focussed coping strategy in younger individuals. However, Blanchard and Irion (1988) in a study found that high internal locus of control is related to high use of problem solving coping style.

**Table No. 2**

**Mean and Standard Deviation of Emotion Focussed Coping Strategy among different categories of Locus of Control**

Locus of Control	Mean	Standard Deviation	f-value	p-value	Remark
Internal	27.05	4.018	6.637	.002	Significant
Intermediate	26.31	4.659			
External	28.58	5.099			

**Table no. 2:** Here, it was seen that the mean of internal LOC, Intermediate LOC and external LOC were 27.05, 26.31 and 28.58 respectively. When applied one-way ANOVA, it was found that there was a significant relationship between Emotion focussed coping Strategy and the different dimensions of LOC ( $p$ -value= 0.002). This finding indicated that participants having External LOC used Emotion Focussed coping strategies more than the participants having Internal and Intermediate LOC. The reason could be that people with an external locus of control attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances. According to Gizir and Aydin (2009), adolescents believe that the things which happen in their lives are out of their control, and even that their own actions are a result of external factors, such as fate, luck, the influence of powerful others and/or a belief that the world is too complex for one to predict or successfully control its outcomes, which can also be found in individuals using emotion focussed coping strategy. Such people tend to blame others rather than themselves for their lives' outcomes. Focusing on as well as venting emotions plus positive reinterpretation and growth are both emotion-focused coping strategies which rely on an external LOC. In addition, Emotion-focused coping strategies also involve such responses as expressing one's emotions and trying to avoid the source of stress, releasing pent-up emotions, distracting oneself, etc (Brannon and Feist, 2009).

**Table No. 3**  
**Mean and Standard Deviation of Social Support Coping Strategy among different categories of Locus of Control**

Locus of Control	Mean	Standard Deviation	f-value	p-value	Remark
Internal	5.02	1.030	7.452	.001	Significant
Intermediate	4.36	1.224			
External	4.55	1.182			

**Table no. 3:** From the table it was observed that the mean of internal LOC, Intermediate LOC and external LOC are 5.02 and 4.55 respectively. When applied ANOVA test, it was found to be significant relationship between Social Support coping strategies with respect to the three different dimensions of LOC ( $p$ -value= 0.001). The finding indicated that respondents having Internal LOC used Social Support coping strategies more than the respondents having Internal and Intermediate LOC. This finding was contradicted by the result of the study done by Nisevic & Rosic (2000) on Coping strategies and locus of control in adolescents who reported that adolescents using social support coping strategy have an external locus of control. This may be because adolescents with internal locus of control may be able to maintain optimum psychological health by deriving their strength from social support through close friends or family members.

## CONCLUSION

From the present study, it can be concluded that significant relationship existed between Emotion focussed coping Strategy and the different dimensions of Locus of Control, which revealed that adolescents having External Locus of Control used Emotion Focussed coping strategies more than the adolescents having Internal and Intermediate Locus of Control.

Adolescents having Internal Locus of Control used Social Support coping strategies more than the adolescents having External and Intermediate Locus of Control.

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