

Locus of Control Across Gender and Birth Order

Abstract

Our locus of control can have considerable influences on our behavior, world view, expectations, future plans and actions etc. Present study is an attempt to investigate the Gender and Birth Order differences in Locus of Control (LOC) of 120 (60 male and 60 female; 60 first born and 60 last born) first year College Students of Government Degree Colleges of Jammu City who fall in the age group of 18-21 year. Hindi adaptation of Rotter's Locus of Control Scale by Kumar and Srinivas is used to collect data which are analyzed by using t-test of significance. Statistically significant gender differences are found in both cases i.e. between the male and female samples and first and last born samples. Both first born and males found more internal in locus than last born and females.

Keywords: Locus of control, birth order; first born and second born.

Introduction

In personality psychology, locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. It is an individual's belief or view about whether s/he is the cause of event(s) or the environmental forces caused event(s). Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954, and has since become an aspect of personality studies. A person's "locus" (Latin for "place" or "location") is conceptualized as either *internal*, the people believe they can control their life or *external* meaning they believe that their decisions and life are controlled by environmental factors which they cannot influence, or by chance or fate. Locus of control is one of the four dimensions of core self-evaluations-one's fundamental appraisal of oneself -along with neuroticism, self-efficacy, and self-esteem.

Alfred Adler was one of the first theorists to use birth-order position in his conceptualization of clients. Birth order continues to inform professionals practicing from an Individual Psychology framework; however, the wealth of research on the topic can seem overwhelming. Gender may be influential when the parents model strong sex role differences. For instance, a third-born child who is the first son born into a family may be treated more like a first-born child than like a later-born child. Adler (1937) added that a unique problem may arise in the case of an older boy who is followed by a slightly younger sister because girls tend to develop faster than boys, this situation may result in the older boy's constantly striving for superiority and, in the girl, a pervasive sense of inferiority may ensue.

Locus of Control

Locus of control refers to the degree to which individuals feel they have control over outcomes (Rotter, 1954). Outcomes themselves can be characterized as self-determined (internal), other-determined (external), or chance-determined (chance). Rotter's early interest was in Alfred Adler's (1937) insights about human nature who propounded the concept of birth order. But Rotter in 1966 went to become a social-learning theorist as he sought the explanations for behavior and personality outside and inside the organism looking both to external reinforcements and internal cognitive processes. He found that some people believe that reinforcements and rewards depend on their own actions whom he regarded people with *internal* locus of control. On the other hand there are people who believe that their reinforcements or rewards are controlled by other people and outside forces. These are people with *external* locus of control.

Externals

They have a fairly strong belief that events are beyond your control. In other words, they do not feel that there is much of a connection between their behavior and their outcomes. This means that they are relatively less likely than others to take credit for their successes or

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to take the blame for their failures. Instead, they tend to believe that success and failure are primarily a matter of luck and chance.

Intermediates

People who have scores in this range have inconsistent views about the degree to which they control their own fate. They probably believe that they do not have control on their own fate in some areas of life, while believing that they have little control in other areas.

Internals

These people have a firm belief in their abilities to influence their own outcomes. Relatively internal scores mean that people generally do not attribute their successes and failures to good and bad luck or chance factors. Instead, they feel that they can influence the course of their lives or what happens to them.

Internally oriented people are more attracted to people they can manipulate, have higher self-esteem, and act in more socially skillful ways (Abdullah, 1989; Brannigan, Hauk and Guay, 1991; Lefcourt, 1982). They are less bothered by stress and burnout, emotional problems (Schmitz, Neumann and Oppermann, 2000). It is also found that they experience comparatively less anxiety and depression, and are less likely to commit suicide (Benassi, Sweeney and Dufour, 1988; Keltikangas-Jarvinen & Raikkonen, 1990; Lefcourt, 1983; Petrosky & Birkhimer, 1991).

They are more resistant to persuasion and coercion, more perceptive and more inquisitive (Findley & Cooper, 1983, Lefcourt, 1984). Other researchers shown that people with higher tendency toward internal locus of control day dreams higher academic grades and achievements and fewer about failures earned.

Physical health differences are also traced among internals and externals. Internals are more cautious about their health and more likely to wear seat belts, to exercise and to quit smoking (Phares, 1993). Internals also showed lower blood pressure and fewer heart attacks than externals. Marshall (1991) delineated four aspects of locus control as it relates to physical health: a) Self-Mastery, b) Illness, c) Illness-Management, and d) Self-Blame. First one is more closely related to physical well-being.

Birth Order

Birth order, one of Adler's most enduring contributions, is the idea that the order of birth is major social influence in the childhood, one from which we create our style of life. According to Adler (1966) although siblings have the same parents and live in the same house yet they do not have identical social environments. Shulman and Mosak (1977) described two definitions of birth order: *ordinal position*, which refers to the actual order of birth of the siblings, and *psychological position*, which refers to the role the child adopts in his or her interactions with others. Adler (1966) emphasized the importance of psychological birth order, stating, "it is not, of course, the child's number in the order of successive births which influences his character, but the situation into

which he is born and the way in which he interprets it". Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956) explained that whereas the environment is same for all the children in the same home, but the psychological situation of each child differs from that of others, because of the their order of succession or birth.

Sulloway (1996) a scholar of birth order studies for two decades, believed that birth order is one of the most powerful influences on the way an individual reacts to the world. He stated that birth order fosters distinctive personality traits across families of different economic, social and ethnic backgrounds. Birth order may affect individual personality especially it may affect the level of self-esteem, (Lester, 1985).

Being younger or older than one's siblings and being exposed to different parental attitudes create different childhood conditions that help to determine personality. Reviews also suggest that first born grow up to more intellectually orient because the parents are overly anxious and they will have more time for them when compared to subsequent children (Zajonc & Markus, 1975). According to Altus (1965) in two-child families, the first born children, either male or female, with younger brothers are significantly more intelligent than those with sisters. Adler wrote about four situations that are:

The First Born Child

At least for a while first born get instant and undivided attention of parents who are happy of a new baby. As a result, first born have a happy and secure existence until the second child appears. Arrival of second child makes first born to feel dethroned and they strive to regain the supremacy of former position but they will never be the same no matter how hard they try. First born often play the role of teachers, tutors, leaders and disciplinarians right from their childhood. Parents expect them to care for younger siblings. This often enables them to mature intellectually to a higher degree than younger children. Adler believed that first born have unusual interests in maintaining order and authority and become good organizers, conscientious and scrupulous about details, authoritarian and conservative in attitude (Schultz & Schultz, 2005).

The Second Born Child

The second born children are also in a unique situation as they never experience powerful position already occupied by the first born. Further they don't feel dethroned if another child is brought to in the family. By this time the parents have usually changed their child-rearing attitudes and practices. For the second born child first born is a role model, a threat and a source of competition that may motivate him to surpass the older sibling, a goal that spurs language and motor development in them (Schultz & Schultz, 2005).

The Youngest Child

These children never face the shock of dethronement by the arrival of another child and often become the pet of the family particularly if the siblings are more than a few years older. If they get endowed with the feelings of competition they usually become high achievers. But opposite can occur if the youngest

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children are excessively pampered and come to believe they didn't learn to do anything for themselves. It can also develop helplessness and dependency of childhood (Schultz & Schultz, 2005).

The Only Child

Only child receive undivided continuous attention and remain center of focus. They spend more time with adults than with siblings, so they often mature early and manifest adult behaviors and attitudes. They are likely to experience difficulties outside the home where as they are not center of attention. Another reason is they have learned neither to share nor to compete (Schultz & Schultz, 2005).

If we have a closer look at the first born, they are often the achievers because they are driven towards success and stardom in their given fields. They tend to be conscientious, well organized, serious, goal oriented, achieving, and believers in authority Lemay (1998).

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the gender differences in the locus of control of students in the first year of college.
2. To assess the birth order differences in the locus of control of students in the first year of college.

Hypotheses of Study

1. There will be no significant gender difference in locus of control of first year college students.
2. There will be no significant birth order difference in locus of control of first year college students.

Method

Participants

A total of 120 first year college going students falling in the age group of 18-21 years are selected from the government colleges of Jammu city. Gender ratio is equally maintained. Additionally, out of 120 students 60 were first born and 60 were last born.

Materials to be used

Hindi adaptation of Rotter's Locus of Control Scale by Kumar and Srinivas is used which is standardized for the age group of 20 to 23 years.

Scoring

The scale is a forced choice instrument which consists of 29 pairs of statements out of which 23 are scored and 6 are filler items which are not scored. Thus maximum possible score is 23 and minimum is 0. In scoring only external alternatives are endorsed i.e. high score indicates the external locus of control. A correlation of 0.89 is found between Hindi and English versions of the scale which is significant at beyond 0.01 level of significance. Rotter (1966) reported good discriminated validity for the scale indicated by low correlations with such variables as intelligence, social desirability and political affiliation.

Procedure

Obtaining permission from the principal's desk of each college was the crucial aspect that marked the beginning of procedure of our study. With the help of college teachers students of first year from each college were chosen as per the requirements of study. Only the interested students were requested to participate. After a proper interaction with students instructions were given and necessary precautions were taken. Each student is provided with Hindi

adaptation of Rotter's Locus of Control Scale by Kumar and Srinivas to fill at the time it is given. Filled scales were collected and scored.

Results and Discussions

Studies had revealed that generally the characteristics of each child in the family differ according to their position in the family. Present study aimed at assessing the locus of control of male and female college students in order to compare it across the gender and birth order. Wee included only first and last born students in our investigation. Below is the table given for the mean scores obtained.

Table 1

Mean score calculated for male students is 8.98 which is categorized in the category of intermediates i.e. they have both internal and external locus of control tendencies. People categorized in this category are inconsistent in their beliefs regarding

S.NO.	Samples	Mean
1.	Male	08.98
2.	Female	11.00
3.	First Born	08.95
4.	Last Born	11.03

their control on their fate. Mean score of female students is 11 which is slightly higher than male sample but too categorized in the category of intermediates. It simply means that both male and female students have inconsistent views about the degree to which they control their own fate.

Mean score obtained by the first born students is 8.95 which is categorized in the category of internals. Participants of this sample have a fair belief in their abilities to influence their life and happenings through their decisions. They will perceive their actions responsible for what they face or receive. We hypothesized average score for first born but they scored below average and thus categorized as internals which rejects our hypothesis of average score.

Mean score obtained by the last born sample is 11.03 which categorized them as externals. Participants in this sample tend to believe that success and failure are primarily a matter of luck and chance i.e. an external factor or condition is responsible. Once again our hypothesis of average score for last born is rejected. Below given table shows the mean scores, standard deviation and critical t-ratios of following samples.

Table 2

Mean standard deviations and critical t-ratios.

S.No	Samples	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-ratios/ CR
1.	Male	08.98	2.671	4.60**
2.	Female	11.00	2.058	
3.	First Born	08.95	2.339	4.38**
4.	Last Born	11.03	2.400	

Calculated critical ratio for means 8.98 and 11 of male and female samples respectively is 4.62 which is greater than the table value of t i.e. 2.58. It indicates significant differences in the locus of control of two

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aforesaid two samples at 0.01 level of significance. For this reason we have to reject our hypothesis of no difference. Present study supported an investigation made by Adrian, Sherman, Graham, Higgs, Robert and Williams (1997). They presented a synthesis of research in the last two decades that has explored the relationship of gender to locus of control measures. Their research suggested that both males and females are becoming more external. Females, however, tend to be more external than males on most locus of control measures. There are also gender differences in perceptions of control across behavioral domains. Factor analyses of locus of control measures indicate that males and females are relatively similar in primary factors but may differ substantially in some secondary factors. Two areas in which males and females appear to differ are perception of control over interpersonal relationships and perception of control over essentially uncontrollable life events. Wehmeyer (1993) examined gender differences in locus of control scores for students with learning disabilities and found significant gender differences were found. On all assessments girls' means were more external than boys'. These results are discussed in light of recent findings concerning gender and positive adult outcomes for learners with learning disabilities and in relation to gender stereotyping and discrimination.

In case of mean 8.95 and 11.03 of first and last born respectively, calculated critical ratio is 4.38 which is larger than 2.58, thus indicates statistically significant differences in the locus of control of the two samples at 0.01 level of significance. For this reason our null hypothesis of no difference is rejected. It simply means that first and last born differ in their beliefs regarding the forces controlling their lives. these results have given us a different and clear insight in the field of birth order and locus of control studies. Also gender importance in relation to these variables is also highlighted in the present study the only thing required is to enroll larger samples in the study and do some further investigations.

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