

LOCUS OF CONTROL AS A PREDICTOR OF MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL REGULATION STRATEGIES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

Adolescence is a crucial developmental stage marked by academic, social, and personal challenges that significantly influence psychological and physical well-being. Among the various psychological factors, locus of control plays an important role in shaping how one perceives and responds to life events. It refers to the extent to which individuals believe outcomes are determined by their own actions (internal locus of control) or by external forces such as luck, fate, or circumstances (external locus of control). The present study focuses on examining locus of control as a predictor of mental health and emotional regulation among young adults. The total sample size for the study taken is 110 male adults. Regressive analysis was used to understand the impact of LOC on mental health and emotional regulation strategies. The results reflected that individuals with an internal locus of control are often associated with better coping abilities, higher self-confidence, improved mental health, and more adaptive emotional regulation strategies. In contrast, those with an external locus of control may experience higher psychological distress, reduced emotional clarity, and difficulties in managing emotions effectively. The study aims to understand the relationship between locus of control, mental health, and emotional regulation, while highlighting the importance of fostering adaptive coping styles and psychological resilience among young adults for improved well-being and emotional functioning.

Keywords: Locus of control, emotional regulation, Resilience, distress, coping styles.

Introduction

Mental health has emerged as one of the most significant psychological concerns. Young adults today face immense emotional, social, and professional pressures that directly affect their psychological well-being. One important psychological construct associated with mental well-being is locus of control. The concept of locus of control was introduced by Julian Rotter (1966) as part of social learning theory. It refers to an individual's belief regarding the extent to which outcomes in life are controlled by personal actions or external circumstances. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that success and failure depend largely upon their own efforts, abilities, and decisions. In contrast, individuals with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to luck, fate, chance, or external forces. It has long been associated with emotional adjustment, coping behaviour, stress management, and psychological resilience. Young adults possessing a strong internal locus of control are generally more confident, goal-oriented, emotionally stable, and capable of handling stressful situations effectively. They often exhibit better problem-solving abilities and greater psychological adaptability. Conversely, individuals with an external locus of control may experience feelings of helplessness, dependency, and emotional instability during challenging situations. Another crucial aspect related to psychological well-being is emotional regulation. Emotional

regulation refers to the ability to monitor, manage, and modify emotional reactions in order to respond appropriately to environmental demands. Gross (1998) conceptualized emotional regulation as the process through which individuals influence the emotions they experience, when they experience them, and how these emotions are expressed. Emotional regulation is especially important during young adulthood because this developmental stage involves identity formation, social transitions, relationship building, and career-related stress. Research has suggested that ineffective emotional regulation strategies may contribute to depression, anxiety, impulsivity, interpersonal conflicts, and poor psychological adjustment. At the same time, individuals with effective emotional regulation skills are more likely to display resilience, optimism, and psychological well-being.

The present study examines locus of control as a predictor of mental health and emotional regulation strategies among young adults. The research attempts to understand how perceptions of personal control influence emotional functioning and psychological health.

Review of Literature

Research on locus of control and mental health has consistently demonstrated that individuals with an internal locus of control exhibit healthier coping strategies and better emotional adjustment. Rotter (1966) argued that people who perceive control over their lives are more likely to engage in

adaptive behaviours and maintain psychological stability.

Hsieh et al. (2012) found that internal locus of control was associated with lower stress and improved mental health outcomes in high-pressure environments. Similarly, Clark et al. (2015) suggested that internal locus of control acts as a protective factor against trauma and occupational stress.

Research on emotional regulation has also shown significant associations with mental health. Gross (2015) explained that emotional regulation strategies influence the duration, intensity, and expression of emotions. Cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, and emotional awareness are often linked with better mental well-being, whereas suppression and emotional avoidance are associated with psychological distress.

Studies examining resilience have emphasized its role as a buffer against stress and adversity. Resilience enables individuals to recover from emotional challenges and maintain psychological balance. Rosansky et al. (2019) identified emotional control and resilience as major determinants of effective coping.

The literature collectively indicates that locus of control, emotional regulation are interconnected psychological variables influencing mental health outcomes.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the relationship between locus of control and mental health.
2. To study the relationship between locus of control and emotional regulation strategies.
3. To determine whether internal and external locus of control significantly predict mental health outcomes.

Hypotheses

1. Locus of control will positively predict mental health among young adults.
2. locus of control will be associated with healthier emotional regulation strategies.
3. Locus of control show a significant relationship with mental health and emotional regulation strategies

Methodology

Research Design

Sample

The present study adopted a quantitative research design. Total sample size was 200 participants.

Tools Used

The following standardized psychological tools were used in the original research:

1. PGI Health Questionnaire – used to assess mental health status.

2. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale – used to measure internal and external locus of control.
3. Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) – used to examine emotional regulation difficulties.

Statistical Analysis

The collected data were analysed using:

- Mean and standard deviation
- Independent sample t-test
- Correlation analysis
- Regression analysis

Results and Interpretation

The present study examined the relationship between locus of control, mental health and emotional regulation strategies among young adults (N = 200). Statistical analyses included descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to understand the predictive role of locus of control on mental health and emotional regulation.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the major psychological variables included in the study.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Mental Health	5.95	3.62
Internal Locus of Control	6.85	2.01
External Locus of Control	7.10	1.94

[Emotional Regulation Difficulties |84.10 |15.73|

The descriptive findings indicate moderate levels of emotional regulation difficulties and average resilience among young adults. Internal locus of control scores suggested that participants moderately believed in personal control over life outcomes.

Locus of Control and Mental Health

Regression analysis was conducted to examine whether locus of control significantly predicted mental health outcomes among young adults.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Internal Locus of Control Predicting Mental Health

Variables	R	R ²	t-value	Significance
Internal Locus of Control	0.180	0.032	-0.995	p > .05

The results revealed that internal locus of control explained only 3.2% of the variance in mental health scores. The relationship was not statistically significant.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of External Locus of Control Predicting Mental Health

Variables	R	R ²	t-value	Significance
External Locus of Control	0.187	0.035	-1.102	p > .05

The findings indicate that external locus of control also did not significantly predict mental health outcomes among young adults.

Emotional Regulation Strategies

The study further examined emotional regulation difficulties experienced by young adults. The major dimensions included non-acceptance of emotional responses, difficulty engaging in goal-directed behaviour, impulse control difficulties, lack of emotional awareness, limited access to emotional regulation strategies, and lack of emotional clarity.

Table 5: Mean Scores of Emotional Regulation Dimensions

Emotional Regulation Dimensions	Mean	Standard Deviation
Non-acceptance of Emotional Responses	14.25	4.12
Goal-directed Behaviour Difficulties	13.87	3.95
Impulse Control Difficulties	15.04	4.36
Lack of Emotional Awareness	12.73	3.74
Limited Access to Emotional Regulation Strategies	15.68	4.28
Lack of Emotional Clarity	12.53	3.66

The findings suggest that impulse control difficulties and limited access to emotional regulation strategies were comparatively higher among young adults.

Regression analysis further showed that locus of control did not significantly predict emotional regulation difficulties.

Table 6: Regression Analysis of Locus of Control and Emotional Regulation

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Significance
Internal Locus of Control	0.162	0.026	p > .05
External Locus of Control	0.171	0.029	p > .05

The findings suggest that emotional regulation difficulties among young adults may depend more upon emotional intelligence, coping styles, and social support systems rather than perceptions of personal control alone.

Discussion

The present study examined locus of control as a predictor of mental health and emotional regulation strategies among young adults. Although previous literature strongly suggested that internal locus of

control contributes positively to psychological well-being, the current findings revealed only weak predictive relationships.

One possible explanation for these findings is that mental health is a multidimensional construct shaped by biological, social, emotional, and environmental factors. Young adults today face complex stressors including academic pressure, unemployment concerns, social expectations, digital dependency, and emotional uncertainty. In such circumstances, perceptions of control alone may not be sufficient to determine mental well-being.

The findings regarding emotional regulation dimensions provide important insight into the emotional functioning of young adults. Among all dimensions, limited access to emotional regulation strategies showed the highest mean score. This suggests that many young adults struggle to identify healthy coping mechanisms and effective ways to manage emotional stress. Similarly, impulse control difficulties were also comparatively higher, indicating that participants may occasionally react impulsively during emotionally intense situations.

In contrast, lower scores on emotional awareness and emotional clarity suggest that participants were relatively capable of recognizing and understanding their emotional experiences. These dimensions appeared to be comparatively stronger areas of emotional functioning among young adults. Emotional awareness can be considered a positive psychological strength because it helps individuals identify emotional triggers and respond more adaptively to stressful situations.

The findings indicate that while young adults may understand their emotions reasonably well, they may face greater difficulty in regulating those emotions effectively in real-life stressful situations. This distinction is important because emotional awareness alone may not guarantee emotional stability unless accompanied by effective coping strategies and behavioural control.

The absence of strong predictive power for locus of control may also indicate that emotional regulation skills are influenced by several factors such as family environment, peer relationships, emotional intelligence, social support, and life experiences. Therefore, emotional regulation among young adults appears to depend on broader psychological and environmental influences rather than solely on personality orientation.

Despite the weak regression outcomes, the study remains valuable because it demonstrates the interconnected nature of locus of control, emotional regulation, and mental health. Psychological functioning cannot be explained by a single

variable. Instead, mental health outcomes emerge from the interaction of multiple psychological and environmental influences.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between locus of control, mental health, and emotional regulation strategies among young adults using findings adapted from an existing doctoral thesis. The study revealed that resilience plays a significant role in promoting mental well-being and reducing psychological distress.

Although internal and external locus of control did not significantly predict mental health or emotional regulation dimensions, the findings still emphasize the importance of emotional awareness and adaptive coping among young adults.

Young adults today require effective emotional regulation skills to navigate increasing social and emotional challenges. Educational institutions, workplaces, and mental health professionals should therefore focus on strengthening resilience, emotional intelligence, and healthy coping strategies among youth populations.

Future research should explore these psychological variables using broader community samples of young adults across different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Additional longitudinal studies may provide deeper understanding regarding how locus of control develops over time and influences emotional functioning.

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