

Analysis

Variables Affecting Personal Effectiveness: An empirical study on B-School Students

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between Locus of Control and Personal Effectiveness of Management Graduates. The present study was done on a sample of 106 management students belonging to different management Institutes. Variables in the study were assessed using two validated Instruments. Descriptive statistics, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Linear regression analysis was used to analyze the data. It was found that Internal Locus of Control was positively related to Personal Effectiveness and Personal Effectiveness is dependent upon Self-Disclosure, Openness to Feedback and Perceptiveness. By understanding the relationship between these variables, the Management Institutes can help B-schools in competency mapping of students which can bridge the gap between the personal and professional aspects.

Key words: Research Paper, Locus of control, Personal Effectiveness, Self-Disclosure, Openness to Feedback, Perceptiveness, Management Students.

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Introduction

There is a crucial difference between doing the right things and merely doing things right. Doing the right things means achieving your job role/ function. Doing things right means doing it with maximum utilization of minimum resources. Personal effectiveness combines both of these. Students are future leaders of any nation and they need to develop their own habits and values in order to increase their personal effectiveness. They need to redesign their lifestyle and learn new skills to develop themselves.

Personal effectiveness is important for the survival and growth of individuals in general and organizations in particular. Management students are the future prospects of corporate world. Effectiveness is as important for the students as it is for managers. Personal effectiveness of an individual is the combination of Self-disclosure, Openness to feedback and perceptiveness. Personal effectiveness is the ability to make a positive and energetic impact onto others by conveying ideas and information clearly and persuasively. It involves planning and prioritizing available means by using interpersonal skills to help build effective working relationships with others and reduce personal stress. It encourages individuals to develop self-knowledge and apply this to their behavior, both in relation to their own job performance and in the role of leading and managing others. At micro level, individual benefits of being personally effective include making a positive personal impact, adding value to working relationships & managing personal development. At macro level, the organizational benefits include development of relationships and skills that enhance rapport and relationships with others, creating high performing team members & building a culture of reflection and self-improvement.

Self-disclosure promotes interpersonal relationships and enhances individual effectiveness. If you disclose yourself to others, you will gain information about others too. Self-disclosure is the one way to learn about how other person thinks and feels. Once a person engages in self-disclosure it is implied that other person will also disclose personal information. Mutual disclosure deepens trust in relationships and helps both people understand each other more. The self-disclosure progresses through a) forming first impressions, b) developing mutual expectations, c) honouring psychological contracts, and d) developing trust and influence. As self-disclosure has advantages, so too it has disadvantages associated with risks. One risk is that self-disclosure does not automatically lead to favourable impressions. Another risk is that the other person will gain power in the relationship because of the information they possess. Finally too much self-disclosure or self-disclosure that comes too early in a relationship can damage the relationship. Students with high self-disclosure tend to be more perceptive and more open to experiences.

Research on locus of control has a long history. Rotter (1996) originally described the psychological construct of locus of control as an element of personality. Locus of control refers to the perception of the extent to which individuals can control events in their lives. Individuals with an internal locus of control judge outcomes of events to be internally controllable. That is, they believe that their own personal efforts, behaviors, or skills will influence and determine outcomes, and they take responsibility for their actions. Individuals with an external locus of control attribute events to external sources. They believe and behave as if forces beyond their control such as chance, luck, fate, or others with greater power represent the important factors in determining the occurrence of reinforcing

events (Rotter, 1966). As such, their own effort or abilities are perceived to have little effect on how events play out. An important feature of locus of control is that it is not reality that is being measured but rather an individual's perception of control over reality. So, if they think they can control what happens in their lives, they behave as though they can (Wallace, 1999). Most people lie somewhere in between these two extremes, believing that both personal effort and outside circumstances will affect the outcomes in their lives. However, a close relationship between locus of control and some other personality traits was not solidly established until the multidimensional models were produced.

Levenson's three dimensional control structure (1981) developed from Rotter's one dimensional model which considers three sources as control perceptions of individuals: controlled by powerful others, and controlled by chance. In Levenson's scales these three different perceptions were reflected by scores in internality, powerful others, and chance subscales. Among them, powerful others and chance were two dimensions of externality.

The relationship between locus of control and risk-taking behavior among adolescents and college students has been investigated. According to Ma (2002), luck remains an elusive theoretical concept in the business literature, yet a fascinating practical phenomenon in business reality. Luck is the serendipitous propensity for opportunities to present themselves out of pure chance (Gunther, 1977), and Barney (1986) argues that it creates a unique endowment that can confer competitive advantage on some organizations. While luck might seem like an arbitrary concept, which is unlikely to be used as a deliberate strategy by organizations to increase their competitive advantage, Ma (2002) found that there are tangible differences between the consistently lucky and the unlucky that allows the concept of luck to be used rationally in business. According to Ma, whether a firm is lucky or not

depends in large part on its particular position, endowments, capabilities, connections and its actions at a particular point in time. Luck appears to favour those individuals, who are always receptive and ready to seize and exploit unexpected opportunities.

Becker(2000) in his studies found that the students with internal locus of control are perceived to be more effective as compared to their counterparts with external locus of control. The study further states that relatively internal-oriented students are more likely to pursue successful study strategies and stress-coping mechanisms, achieve higher grades, and, therefore, award relatively higher evaluation scores than their more externally oriented classmates, *ceteris paribus*. Likewise, relatively external-oriented students are more likely to engage in passive and unsuccessful study strategies, cope poorly with course-induced stress, achieve lower grades, and blame others for their performance relative to their more internally oriented classmates, holding all else constant.

In the present study, relationship between locus of control and personal effectiveness of management graduates was examined to see if students with internal locus of control are high on personal effectiveness than students with external locus of control.

Review of Literature

Locus of control concept was originally based on Rotter's (1954) social learning theory and refers to 'the extent to which people perceive contingency relationships between their actions and their outcomes' (MacDonald, 1973, p. 169). The underlying concept is that of empowerment – the conscious direction, selection and regulation of all knowledge structures and intellectual processes in the pursuit of personal goals, intentions and choices (McCombs, 1991; Mearns 2002). In simple terms, a person's locus of control refers to an

individual's perceived mastery of their environment and how far they see themselves in control of their destiny. People who believe that they can control their own destiny are referred to as *internals* and those who believe that their experiences are determined by factors outside their control are referred to as *externals*. The locus of control has been found to be an important predictor of opportunistic behaviour, motivation and personal effectiveness in a number of studies. For example, Rotter (1966) found that people with an internal locus of control are more likely to be attentive to opportunities in the environment to improve the attainment of their goals; engage in actions to improve their environment; place a greater emphasis on striving for achievement; be more inclined to develop their own skills; ask more questions; and remember more information than people with an external locus of control.

Costa and Mc. Crae (1992) stressed that open individuals are curious about both inner and outer worlds, and their lives are experientially richer. They are willing to entertain new ideas and unconventional values, and they experience both positive and negative emotions more keenly than do closed individuals. Openness to experience is included to the five-factor model of personality proposed by Costa and Mc. Crae(1992).

Cross-cultural studies on locus of control revealed that individuals with an oriental cultural background tend to be more externally controlled than their western counterparts. Mahler (1974) detected that, as predicted, Japanese undergraduates scored significantly lower than did American undergraduates in internality. Hsieh, Shybut and Lotsof (1969) examined Anglo Americans, Hong-Kong Chinese and American born Chinese high school students and detected that Hong-Kong Chinese were most external; American born

Chinese were more internal than Hong-Kong Chinese; and Anglo-Americans were most internal among these three groups of students.

Traditionally, western culture was conceived as valuing and fostering internality and creativity. It has been believed that a democratic and free western educational environment had positive influence on the development of personality. Thus students with a western cultural background should be more internal and creative than students with other cultural backgrounds. Cross-cultural studies had come to the conclusion western students are generally more internal than their eastern counterparts. However, not all cross-sectional studies on creativity support a parallel assumption that students in western culture are more creative than oriental students

In a more recent study, Maddux (1991) used the locus of control to study peoples' career decisions and found that people with an internal locus of control are far more motivated and ambitious than people with an external locus of control and that they showed significantly higher ratings in job proficiency and learning. However, Carlopio *et al.* (2001) and Durand and Shea (1974) found that individuals with an external locus of control are more inclined to be effective leaders and show more consideration to other people. Furthermore, they are more likely to comply with instructions that are at variance with their own experiences of events and be more predictable in dealing with unexpected events. However, many of these findings are complicated by issues such as gender, race and class. For example, Phares (1976) found that gender often moderates the relationship between the locus of control and behaviour. In particular, an internal locus of control is less likely to result in opportunistic behaviour in males than females because males seem to have a greater need to protect themselves against failure which results in greater external attributions.

People with external loci are generally more apt to be stressed and suffer from depression as they are more aware of work situations and life strains. Women tend to have more of external locus than men. (Jones and Page, 1986; Linder, 1986; Doherty and Baldwin, 1985; and Roodin et al. 1974). A more internal locus of control is generally seen as desirable. Having an Internal locus of control can also be referred to as "personal control", "self-determination", etc. Males tend to be more internal than females; as people get older they tend to become more internal; People higher up in organizational structures tend to be more internal. Internal locus of control appears to protect one against unquestioning submission to authority (Lefcourt, 1982). Internals are more resistant to influences from other people. They make more independent judgments and try harder to control the behavior of others. They tend to assume more responsibility for their own behaviour and attribute responsibility to others. As a result, they are more likely to be punitive and less sympathetic than externals.

In Rotter's own words (1966, 618), external locus of control individuals believe that "reinforcements are not under their personal control but rather are under the control of powerful others, luck, chance, fate, etc.," but internal locus of control individuals believe that "reinforcements are contingent upon their own capacities, behavior, or attributes." Even though the terms used in these descriptions call to mind the typical classroom where grades are clearly "reinforcements" for student performance, where teachers and professors are often viewed as "powerful others," where student can be heard rationalizing poor scores by blaming "bad luck," and where instructors plead with their students for self-discipline and more study time, relatively few empirical studies in the extensive locus of control literature are set in the college classroom (Lefcourt 1982). However the literature does

address a number of issues relative to our central focus. Evidence suggests that to some extent a person's locus of control is an inherited trait (Miller and Rose 1982; Pederson et al 1989) and it is, therefore likely to be linked with differences in cerebral functioning (De Brabander, Boone, and Gertis 1992). It follows then that internally oriented and externally oriented individuals will tend to pursue different strategies to acquire knowledge and learning. Phares (1976) reported that those who are internally oriented learn more from past experience and feedback than those who are more externally oriented. Similarly, in a study focuses upon learning style and the academic behavioural patterns of British undergraduates, Cassidy & Eachus(2000) found that external locus of control was associated with apathetic learning approaches whereas an internal locus of control was associated with the adoption of deep/strategic learning approaches. Thus Cassidy and Eachus concluded that academic self-efficacy is positively correlated with an internal locus of control. Furthermore, Zhang and Richarde's(1999) study of American college Freshman also found a positive relationship between productive study habits and an internal locus of control and that the study habits were significantly related to achievements as measured by grade. An individual's locus of control orientation also influences interpersonal relationships and behavior within groups. In an experimental study using young European managers as subjects, Boone, Van Olffen, and Wiffeloostuijn (1998) found that locus of control is an important determinant in the ultimate success of groups and teams. Teams compressed of only internally oriented managers outperformed teams made up of only externally oriented managers. However these externally oriented groups, in turn, outperformed teams comprised of mixed internally and externally oriented individuals. Apparently in the mixed team the differences in strategies and coping mechanisms between team members limited the effectiveness of overall group performance. Such

findings have obvious implications for the college classroom where learning activities and projects often involve direct personal interaction with classmates and teamwork.

Wheeless and Grontz (1976) conceptualized self-disclosure as "any message about the self that a person communicates to another". In other words, self-disclosure is a way of willingly making others aware of information about yourself. Many self-disclosure messages include personal facts about ourselves that other individuals would not be able to uncover on their own. Derlega and Berg (1987) noted that self-disclosure is related to getting closer to others. Wheelless and Grontz (1976) designed a self-disclosure measure looking at: truthfulness, conscious intent, valence of the disclosure, the extent, and the quantity of self disclosure. Unlike other measures, the instrument is unconfined to the subject-matter. In addition, the measure can be applied to various situations and different types of relationships. They assumed that people who are able to disclose may be high on Internal locus of control.

Paul W. Grimer, Meghan J. Millea & Thomas J. Woodruff in their study found that internally controlled students were more open minded and ready to experience new ideas than externally controlled and close minded counterparts. It further says that students with an external locus of control orientation, who believe they have little or no control over their environment, are less likely to assume personal responsibility for their course performance and are more prone to blame powerful others or outside factors, such as luck or fate, to explain observed outcomes. In a previous research done by Butterfield (1964) it was found that such students are more likely to experience frustration and anxiety in a classroom setting where they perceive that they have little control over their final grade.

As per the knowledge of the authors, although there are certain studies of citing locus of control as a personality

variable but there seems a paucity of research in linking locus of control to personal effectiveness. The present research is the first of its kind to relate locus of control of personal effectiveness.

Objective of the Study

To examine the relationship between Locus of Control and Personal Effectiveness of management graduates.

Hypotheses

H₁: Internal locus of control is positively correlated with Personal Effectiveness.

H₂: Personal Effectiveness is dependent upon openness to feedback, self-disclosure and perceptiveness

In order to test the second hypotheses, following research model was made.

Figure 1 : Research Model and Variables

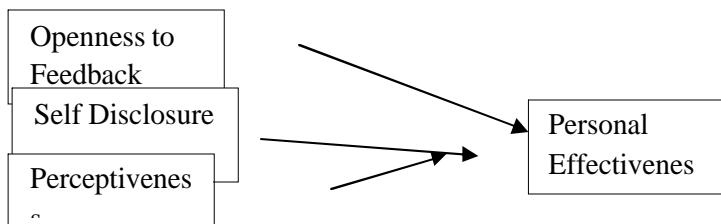
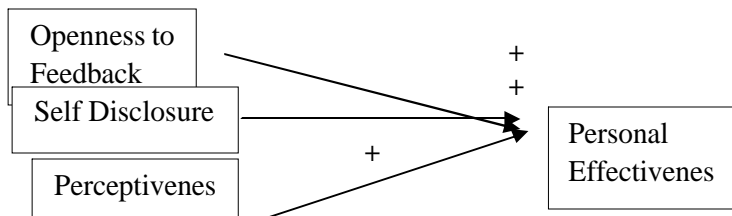


Figure 2 :Hypothetical Research Model



Research Methodology

Sampling

The sample size for this study consisted of 6 Management Institutes of Delhi and NCR region. Sample size of 120 was taken, out of which 14 questionnaire were rejected. Thus, the analysis was done on the 106 respondents.

Research Instruments

Locus of Control Inventory (LOCO)

This scale was developed by Udai Pareek (1992). The LOCO inventory has 10 items each for internality, externality (others), and externality (luck). A 5-point scale is used in scoring responses ranging from “hardly feel” (0) to “Strongly feel” (4). An example item is : “The cause of my career largely depends on me and My promotion in the organization depends mostly on my ability and effort”. The three dimensions of Locus of control are: Internal (I), External (E-O), External (E-C). Out of three dimensions only one dimension viz., Internal locus of control was found to be significant ($r = .78$)

Personal Effectiveness Scale-Students (PE Scale-S)

This scale was developed by Udai Pareek. The scale gives the profile in terms of self-disclosure, openness to feedback and perceptiveness. It contains 15 statements, 5 for each aspect. A 5-point scale is used in scoring responses ranging from “not at all true” (0) to “most characteristic of you” (4). In the present study all three factors self-disclosure ($r = .77$), openness to feedback ($r = .76$) and perceptiveness($r = .75$) were found to be significant.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficient of Instruments

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach
Internal Locus of Control	10	.82
Self-Disclosure	5	.77
Openness to feedback	5	.76
Perceptiveness	5	.75

Personal Effectiveness	15	.78
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As seen from Table-1, the instruments used in the study were reliable with coefficients ranging from 0.75 to 0.82, which exceeded the minimum acceptance level of 0.70 (Nunnaly, 1978).

Table 2: Mean, SD &Correlations of the computed Variables under study

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Internal Locus of Control	1				
Self-Disclosure	.34**	1			
Openness to feedback	.32**	.27**	1		
Perceptiveness	.36**	.29**	.37**	1	
Personal Effectiveness	.45**	.64**	.76**	.60**	1
Mean	33.02	9.98	14.07	11.08	
SD	35.35	4.57	5.41	3.41	8.56

N=106; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Table 2 shows the mean & SD's of the variables under study. From Table 2, it can be observed that the mean value for each of the dimensions of personal effectiveness ranges from 9.98 to 14.07, with the standard deviation of 3.41 to 5.41. The mean score computed for Internal locus of control was 33.02 and standard deviation was 4.57. The mean for personal effectiveness was 35.35 with a standard deviation score of 8.56.

The table further shows that Internal Locus of Control is positively and significantly related to Personal Effectiveness

at .01 level of significance. Thus, the first hypothesis of the research is proved.

To analyze the second hypotheses i.e. Personal Effectiveness is dependent upon Openness to feedback, Self-disclosure & Perceptiveness, Linear Regression was applied as per the table given below.

Regression Results

Table 3 represents the regression outcomes of the study variables. It was performed to test the hypotheses for overall measure of Personal Effectiveness.

Equation:

$$PE = A + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3$$

Personal Effectiveness = Intercept + Coefficient (Openness to Feedback) + Coefficient (Self-disclosure) + Coefficient (Perceptiveness)

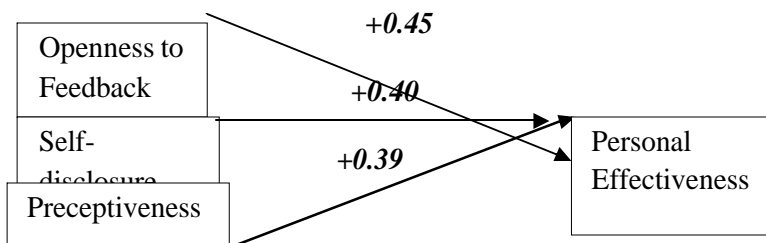
One regression equation was used for analysis. Equation included three Independent variables (Openness to Feedback, Self-disclosure, and Perceptiveness) and one Dependent Variable (Personal Effectiveness). The output in the case of equation, 47% the result is statistically significant.

Table 3: Results of Regression Model

<i>Variables</i>	<i>PE = A + β₁X₁ + β₂X₂ + β₃X₃</i>
<i>PE</i>	-
<i>Openness to Feedback</i>	<i>0.45**</i>
<i>Self-disclosure</i>	<i>0.40**</i>
<i>Perceptiveness</i>	<i>0.39**</i>
<i>R²</i>	<i>0.32</i>
<i>Adj R²</i>	<i>0.31</i>
<i>Change in R²</i>	<i>0.47</i>
<i>Sig. F Change</i>	<i>0.000</i>

N=106; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05

Table 3 shows that, as a set of predictors, the three variables explained an additional 47% of Variance in Personal Effectiveness. Specifically, it can be observed that Openness to feedback, Self-disclosure & perceptiveness is positively and significantly related to Personal Effectiveness at 0.01 levels.



Discussion

The present study aimed to investigate two major aspects. Firstly, it attempted to identify the locus of control of management students. The second aspect was to examine the relationship between personal effectiveness and its different dimensions i.e. openness to feedback, self-disclosure and perceptiveness. Through this an attempt was made to link locus of control and personal effectiveness relationship.

As per our first hypothesis that Personal effectiveness is positively correlated with internal locus of control, it is proved by the results derived in Table-2. It was found that personal effectiveness is positively correlated to the internal locus of control ($r=.45, p<.01$). In other words, the students who believe that their own personal efforts, behaviors, or skills will influence and determine outcomes, and they take responsibility for their actions will be more effective as compared to the students who attribute events to external sources. This is being supported by the previous studies. The empirical evidence further indicates that life time educational

achievement and career success are often positively correlated with an internal locus of control (Obrien 1984). Becker (2000) in his studies found that the students with internal locus of control are perceived to be more effective as compared to their counterparts with external locus of control. Another study by Maddux (1991), used the locus of control to study peoples' career decisions and found that people with an internal locus of control are far more motivated and ambitious than people with an external locus of control and that they showed significantly higher ratings in job proficiency and learning.

The second hypothesis that Personal Effectiveness is dependent upon openness to feedback, self-disclosure and perceptiveness is also proved by our results. Students with internal locus of control are keen observers and are able to identify emotions of others in a more effective manner as compared to students with external locus of control. Students with internal locus of control are able to take cues about others feelings and reactions while interacting with them. People with high internal locus of control develop trust feeling for others easily as compared to people with external locus of control because they do not hold others responsible for their actions and outcomes. Results further indicate that the students who go for self-disclosure or sharing of their individual identity with others are more empathetic as compared to students low on self-disclosure. Students who assume responsibility to determine their outcomes are ready to accept feedback and learn from their mistakes. Results are consistent with Phares(1976) who reported that those who are internally oriented learn more from past experiences and feedback than those who are more externally oriented. This is being supported by the previous studies. Bass and Yammarino (1991), in their study found that individual characteristics, such as internal locus of control, intelligence and achievement

orientation are associated with self-evaluation and these variables reflect the individual's willingness to seek, attend to, and accept feedback. Other researchers have found that the people who are high in self-monitoring are socially perceptive and able to modify their behavior to the demands of the situation.

Avolio (1999) found that people who are ready for development are able to step back and see how their actions affect others. Paul W. Grimer, Meghan J. Millea & Thomas J. Woodruff in their study found that internally controlled students were more open minded and ready to experience new ideas than externally controlled and close minded counterparts. It further says that students with an external locus of control orientation, who believe they have little or no control over their environment, are less likely to assume personal responsibility for their course performance and are more prone to blame powerful others or outside factors, such as luck or fate, to explain observed outcomes.

Significance of the study and Scope for further research

The findings of this study are indeed significant for B-Schools. The findings would make management institutes realize the importance of personal effectiveness among students. It would help the faculty of B-schools in identifying the significance of locus of control among their students which would further assist them in using right pedagogy for the students leading to effective implementation of group and team work in the class-room. If the group/team work is not properly structured, learning process may not be a positive experience for all the students involved.

This research had focused on only three dimensions of personal effectiveness. Other personality variables like tolerance of ambiguity, conscientiousness, agreeableness, self-monitoring etc. can be taken into consideration to identify the

overall effectiveness of students. This study was conducted on students from Delhi & NCR region only, the work can be pursued further to gather opinions from large number of students from different geographical areas.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that personal effectiveness among students is closely related to the internal locus of control. Students with internal locus of control were found to be higher on personal effectiveness. The findings of the study would help the B-Schools in competency mapping of their students and making right job-person fit from the placement perspective.

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