

Original Research Article

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF LOCUS OF CONTROL ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN OWERRI EDUCATION ZONE I OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA

Abstract

The study investigated perceived influence of Locus of control on Secondary school students' academic achievement in Imo State. It adopted correlation research design. One research question and one hypothesis guided the study. The population is made up of 5,396 students from the 71 public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo state. The sample size is 360 students from the twelve chosen secondary schools. The sampling was done through simple random sampling technique. The instrument for data collection for this study was Researchers-made questionnaire titled "Locus of Control Questionnaire" (LOCQ) with 14 items having 4 point rating scale. Students' school Performances were used to determine their Academic Achievement. Pearson r Correlation Coefficient method was used to determine the correlation of the result from the administration. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained. The data obtained were analyzed using chi-square test. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance. Contingency Coefficient C was used to interpret correlation coefficient between the variables. Result revealed that there is a positive moderate relationship between Students' Locus of control and their Academic Achievement. From the finding, it was recommended among others that School counselors should educate students on the importance of having internal locus of control so as to be achievement oriented.

Keywords: Locus of Control, Students, Academic Achievement.

Introduction

Education is a catalyst to the development of a child, individuals, society and nation as a whole (Asiru as cited in Nwadike and Pelemo, 2019). Therefore, there is an inherent aspiration by schools around the globe to ensure that quality and sound graduates are produced from various levels of educational institution. To achieve this, the personal characteristics of the learners (students) should be taken into consideration. These characteristics include factors that can affect the academic achievement of the student. Locus of control as one of these factors is a mind construct which goes a long way in determining how a student perceives the underlying causes of his/her success or failure in his/ her academic pursuit. Locus of control refers to one's belief in his or her abilities to control life events (Strauser, Ketz and Keim 2002). It is the perception which a person attributes the outcome of events in his/her life either as their own doing or by outside forces which they have no control of. In education, it refers to how students attribute the causes of their academic success or failure in school. The extent to which one attributes these outcomes to either internal or external reflects their dimension of locus of control.

The concept of locus of control was originally developed by Julian Rotter in the 1950s and refers to an individual's perception about the underlying causes of events in his/her life. An individual may perceive that the reinforcement that follows his/her behaviour is not completely related or that his/her behaviour is under the control of other powerful sources. If an individual interprets his/her behaviour this way, his/her belief is called external control in the social learning theory. In contrast, if the individual perceives that the reinforcement is contingent on his/her action, he/she is considered to manifest internal control (Rotter, as cited in Tyler, Heffeman and Fortune, 2020).

In the dimension of internal locus of control, a person may believe that the reward or outcome of events that occurred in his/her life is as a result of his own doing and if he does not succeed in achieving a task, believes it to be lack of enough effort on his own part and may exert more effort in accomplishing the set goal. For example, a student who doesn't perform well in an examination would conclude that he did not study enough for the exam and realize that he/she needs to put in more effort in order to excel the next time. Whereas a person whose dimension of locus of control is external, attribute the outcome of events in him/her to outside forces beyond his control, and therefore no contribution is needed on his part. For example a student who performs poorly in exam, rather than accepting his lack of effort, attribute it to lack of luck and would not likely study hard to excel in the next one because he feels that those that excelled was not because of their effort but because of luck. This is the underlying concept of locus of control. Given that locus of control measures a belief that is supposedly learned (Rotter, as cited in Tyler, Heffeman and Fortune, 2020), it seems even more likely that the larger social environment will influence locus of control orientation.

Internal locus of control is generally seen as desirable and is usually referred to as personal control or self determination.

Mamlin, Harris & Case, (2001) concluded the followings in their research work;

- Males tend to have more internal locus of control than females.
- As people get older, they tend to acquire more internal locus of control.
- People higher up in organizational structures tend to have more internal locus of control.

However, there are important considerations before one can generalize that internal locus of control is better than external locus of control as follows;

- People with internal locus of control who lack competence, efficacy and opportunity could become neurotic. Internal locus of control orientation needs to be matched with competence, self-efficacy and opportunity so that the person can successfully experience sense of personal control and responsibility.
- External locus of control can lead to easy going, relaxed and happy lives.

Despite these cautions, Hans (2000), observed that people with more internal locus of control tend to be more achievement oriented and tend to get better paid jobs. Also according to Wu, Tang, and Kwok (2004) Research has linked an internal locus of control with high self efficacy and high educational aspirations. According to Cheerl, Jeefrary, Walter & Diana, (2007), coping processes vary as a function of the perceived controllability of a situation and an internal locus of control may have adaptive value in the face of misfortune by providing victims with a motivation to work to change their plight rather than retreat to a sense of apathy or hopelessness.

Academic achievement is an important criterion by which learning activities are measured. According to Okeke, Nwikpo and Anierobi (2019), Academic achievement is the extent in which a student or institution has achieved their short or long term educational goals. Within the school, this can be assessed through examinations in order to ascertain the degree of knowledge attained by the student. Bennett as cited in Kpolovie, Joe and Okoto (2014), asserted that academic achievement is commonly measured with examinations, that assess important procedural knowledge such as skills and declarative knowledge such as facts which a student have learnt. In the same vein, Santrock as cited in Okeke, Nwikpo and Anierobi (2019) referred it to what students have learned or what skills the students have learned and is usually measured through assessment like standardized tests and performance assessment. According to Nejati, Abedi, Aghaci and Mohammadi (2017), there is a strong relationship between locus of control

and academic achievement. Locus of control determines students' motivational force toward academic success. A students' belief in the causes of his/her success or failure play a critical role in influencing their academic achievement. Students' perception about the underlying causes of events in their lives is paramount in their achievement expectations. Some students believe that reinforcement that follows their behavior is not contingent upon their behavior. These students fall under externals. They always believe that they can achieve academic excellence through chance, luck, destiny etc. Most times, this group of students absconds from academic work for gratification. They are more engaged in extracurricular activities leaving academic work in the hands of chance, luck, destiny or powerful others.

The externals lack concentration in class and hardly commit the instruction of the lesson to memory because they believe that achievement is not through effort or commitment. They attribute everything that happens to them to outside forces. They perceive themselves as having less control over events and blame outside forces or powerful others for their experiences. Externals can perform better in academic excellence only when they begin to take their blames for poor performance rather than shifting it to fate, chance, luck, external forces or powerful others, in other words shifting from external to internal. Externals lack scholarly orientation and gear toward academic failure.

On the other hand, students with internal locus of control believe themselves as primarily in control of their behavior. To these students, they are masters of their destinies. These students believe that their success or failure lies with them. Internals believe that they are controllers of the outcome of their educational goal and therefore always work hard to achieve success. They are more committed to academic task and always achieve excessively higher than externals.

According to Türker and İnel, (2012), Locus of control forms during childhood and stabilizes during adolescence; and it depends on various experiences the individual goes through including culture, religion, societal influence, sex, age, and training. Understanding the level or type of student's locus of control is important in planning a training session or adopting learning style of these students, since the students with an internal locus of control may be more likely to do well at distance learning situations that require a certain amount of independence from the learner, while the students with an external locus of control will need more encouragement and guidance from the instructor (Barzegar, 2011).

Empirically, Khir, Redzuan, Hamsan and Shahrimin (2015) study proved that students who have higher level of academic achievement tend to have internal locus of control, compared to students with low academic achievement. In same vein, a study by Majzub, Bataineh, Ishak, Rahaman (2009) discovered a significant positive relationship between internal locus of control and academic achievement. Also Abid, Kanwal, Nasir, Iqbal, Huda (2016) among other things discovered that learning performances of the students with internal locus of control are high and they are more proactive and effective during the learning process. On the other hand, the ones with external locus of control are more passive and reactive during this period.

Statement of the problem

The backwardness or lack of interest of some students towards achieving academic goals makes it paramount for the researchers to find out if students' locus of control has any relationship with their academic achievement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate perceived influence of locus of control on secondary school students' academic achievement in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo State, Nigeria, specifically, to establish the relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement.

Research Question

The research question formulated to guide this study is:

What is relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis formulated in search for the answer to the research question, is

Ho: There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement.

Method

The researchers adopted correlation research design which was aimed at assessing the relationship between students' locus of control and their academic achievement in Owerri Education Zone I of Imo state. The population of the study constituted 5,369 senior secondary one (SS1) students of public secondary schools in the study area. Twelve public secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone I were selected using simple random sampling technique by balloting. The instrument for data collection for this study was Researcher-made questionnaire titled "Locus of control Questionnaire" (LOCQ) with 14 items having 4 point rating scale ranging from Strongly Agree – 4 points, Agreed – 3 points, Disagree – 2 points, Strongly Disagree – 1 point. Thirty (30) SS 1 students were selected from each chosen school according to their academic performances. Students' school performances were used to determine their academic achievement. Their academic achievements were categorized as above average,

average and below average. Pearson r Correlation Coefficient method was used to determine the correlation of the results from the administration. A reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained.

The twelve chosen schools have equal number of respondents (30); hence a total number of 360 respondents were used for the study. The data collected were statistically analyzed using chi-square (X^2) test. The hypothesis was tested using 0.05 as level of significance.

Range of scores for classifying students above average, average, and below average are as follows:

Above average – 60% and above

Average – 50% - 59%

Below Average – below 50%

Result

Research Question

What is the relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement?

Table 1: Data showing response on the relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement

Locus of control	Students' Academic Achievement			Total	%
	Above Average	Average	Below Average		
Internal	95	83	22	200	55.56
External	36	98	26	160	44.44
Total	131	181	48	360	100
%	36.39	50.28	13.33		

The above table shows 95 students above average, 83 students on average and 22 students below average have internal locus of control while 36 students above average, 98 students on average and 26 students below average have external locus of control.

A total of 200 students are internals representing 55.56% of the entire sample. A total of 160 students are externals representing 44.44% of the entire sample. The total number above average is 131 (36.39%), average is 181 (50.28%) and below average is 48 (13.33%).

Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement.

Table 2: Chi-Square test analysis significant relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement.

Cell	Fo	Fe	$\frac{(Fo-Fe)^2}{Fe}$
1	95	52.78	33.77
2	36	16.00	25.00
3	83	46.11	29.51
4	98	43.56	68.00
5	22	12.22	08.18
6	26	11.56	18.03
X^2 (Calculated)	-		182.49
$X^2_{2, 0.05}$	-		5.99

Critical value of x^2 for 2 df and 0.05 level of significance

$$(X^2_{2, 0.05}) = 5.99$$

$$X^2 - \text{calculated} = 182.49$$

$$X^2 - \text{critical} = 5.99$$

The calculated value is more than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement is rejected in favour of alternative hypothesis. The implication of this is that locus of control is one of the variables that determine the academic achievement of students. Contingency coefficient C which is 0.58 indicates a positive moderate relationship between Students' locus of control and their academic achievement.

Discussion of finding

The study reveals that there is relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement. Based on the finding, it can be deduced that locus of control affects academic achievement. Students with external locus of control are not achievement oriented; they believe that their hard work has no role to play in their success/failure thereby lagging behind in curricular activities. While on the other hand students with internal locus of control are achievement oriented, they work hard to achieve success and believe they are to blame if they don't succeed. This is in agreement with Nejati, Abedi, Aghaci and Mohammadi (2017) who discovered a strong relationship between locus of control and academic achievement. Also Khir, Redzuan, Hamsan and Shahrimin (2015) study proved that students who have higher level of academic achievement tend to have internal locus of control, compared to students with low academic achievement. The null hypothesis which states that there is no relationship between locus of control and academic achievement was rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Locus of control influences students' academic achievement.

Conclusion

The study seeks to find out the relationship between locus of control and students' academic achievement in public secondary schools in Owerri education zone I of Imo state. The result of the analysis proved that students' locus of control influences their academic achievement. Internals proved to be achievement motivated while externals are not.

Recommendations

1. Since students whose efforts are consistently rewarded develop internal locus of control, parents and teachers should reward the students' efforts.
2. School counselors should educate students on the importance of having internal locus of control so as to be achievement oriented.
3. Students should be made to understand that the reinforcement that follows their action is contingent upon their behavior so as to develop internal locus of control.

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