

LOCUS OF CONTROL AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS' COUNSELORS IN PENANG

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Abstrak. Satu kajian mengenai lokas kawalan telah dilakukan keatas 32 orang kaunselor dari beberapa buah sekolah menengah di Pulau Pinang. Responden terdiri daripada 11 orang kaunselor lelaki dan 21 orang kaunselor perempuan yang mempunyai pengalaman kaunseling di sekolah yang berbeza. Kaunselor-kaunselor tersebut telah melengkapkan Skala Multidimensi Levenson yang mempunyai bahagian atau sub-skala Lokas kawalan jenis "Internal", "Powerful others", dan "Chance" (I, P, dan C). Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengenalpasti jenis lokas kawalan di kalangan responden dan untuk mengetahui sama ada kaunselor sekolah yang berbeza jantina dan pengalaman kerja menjawab instrumen I, P, dan C lokas kawalan dengan berlainan. Keputusan kajian menunjukkan bahawa kaunselor sekolah yang terlibat mempunyai lokas kawalan "internal". Tidak ada perbezaan yang signifikan di antara lelaki dan perempuan dan di antara individu yang mempunyai pengalaman berkerja yang kurang dan yang lebih daripada lima tahun di dalam bidang Bimbingan dan Kaunseling di sekolah mereka berdasarkan Skala I, P, dan C.

INTRODUCTION

Locus of control (LOC) refers to the individual's feeling or perception on the relationship between behavior and life events and the individual's responsibility for the event (Jonassen & Grabbowaski, 1993). This concept represents generalized expectations concerning rewards and punishments (Pervin, 1989; Schultz & Schultz, 1994).

The locus of control has its origin from Rotter's Social Learning Theory (SLT). It is a theory in personality and method used in Counseling and Psychotherapy. In areas known as "expectations", Rotter viewed the human behavior as a function of various expectations and reinforcements from his own observations on human beings, he concluded that different people faced virtually the same set of conditions for learning or in different situations will learn very different things. The model integrated ideas from the stimulus-response psychology and from the contemporary cognitive tradition of Lewin (Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993).

The concept proposed by Rotter explains that individual differences attributed from reinforcements is a result of a behavior from external or internal sources. Nevertheless, Levenson (1973) suggested the need to classify external locus of control into two types, namely the Powerful others and the Chance locus of control. Her studies developed a multidimensional conceptualization to differentiate between powerful others and chance external orientation believing that the most important events are controlled by powerful others, and that the orientation from the powerful others, under some conditions, may involve realistic perceptions that are associated with purposeful action" (Levenson, 1981, p. 31).

Rotter (1990) also stated that Locus of control refers to a condition where a person expects a contingent reinforcement of ones' behavior. It may also be a personal characteristics to which a person expecting the reinforcement is a function of chance, luck, or fate which is under the control of powerful others or simply unpredictable. The generalized expectancies from one situation to another depends upon the degree of similarity between situations. According to Weiner (1992), individual differences in terms of locus of control are responsible for the expectations of reinforcement rather than the drive, need, or other intrapsychic motive constructs. Rotter (1990) also viewed that reinforcements do not have direct influence on behavior, but to the individual's perceptions which are mediated between perceiving a reinforcement on oneself. According to Rychman (1993), individuals who perceived success in work as controlled by chance or fate relies less on their past experiences. Their current behavior are learned less and they performed poorly than with individuals who perceives the success as a determined skill.

The propensity to engage in political behavior is stronger for individuals with high internal locus of control than those with high external locus of control. On an individual level, people with internal locus of control are more individualistic, assertive, interested in gaining knowledge and rely on their abilities and skills to face risky situations than people who believe others have control over them. At the societal level, people with an internal locus of control are more concerned with social problems; active oriented and tries to solve the problems believing these problems are under their control (Maddi, 1996). While some people see the link between behavior and the reinforcement occurring after, others don't as Rotter (1982) assumes that, people differ from each other in their belief in reinforcements.

Furthermore, locus of control greatly influence an individual's behavior. Individuals with an external locus of control normally believed that their behavior and abilities are not influenced by the reinforcement received. Thus, the person exerts little effort to improve it (Schultz & Schultz, 1994). The perceived locus of control has implications especially because it influences how people react to many different situations. For example, the school counselors' beliefs on the controlling circumstances are the core elements to understand life in the world (Shapiro, Schwartz, & Astin, 1996).

Thus, in the context of school counseling, counselors with high internal locus of control have better control of their own behaviors and tends to exhibit more diplomatic behaviors during the counseling sessions. On the other hand, from the theory, the situation is totally opposite for counselors who believed that their success and failures in conducting counseling session is not due to their own efforts but to some external factors (McCown, Driscoll, & Roop, 1996). Thus, a way to understand better and explains the school counselors' actions and behaviors is to examine how they attribute and analyze their success and failures in counseling. Further, a counselor's locus of control plays an important role making an impact on the effectiveness of a particular counseling session.

Previous studies have cited differences between males and females in their locus of control. The study of Mwamwenda (1995) on South African students, males tend to score towards internality, while females were towards externality. However, according to Hojat, Glaser, Xu, Veloski, and Christian (1999), there is no significant difference observed on gender on the of external locus of control. Thus, gender as a variable was chosen for the study. It looked into whether gender as a variable influenced the counselors' locus of control. The length of experience was also chosen as a variable to support the Social Learning Theory's view on individuals that normally adopt internal Locus of control as age increases (Rotter, 1990).

On the other hand, for employment, length of experience was considered to be related to locus of control. Organ and Greene (1974) stated that longer tenure encourages a sense of empowerment in conducting one's job activities. Consistent to this premise, an internal Locus of control orientation was found to be associated with job tenure (Organ & Greene, 1974). The studies documented by Snead and Harrell (1991) revealed that life stress and undesirable work decreases job satisfaction. The same study also indicated that an individual with an internal locus of control perceived stress to be associated with higher performance and job satisfaction. The study also showed that increasing job satisfaction leads to willingness to work for longer hours among individuals with internal locus of control. Both job satisfaction and the willingness to work in long hours are associated with a higher career aspiration.

As presented earlier, the main purpose of the study was to find out the locus of control among the 32 participating school counselors and to examine whether there are any differences in terms of the three locus of control, namely Internal, Powerful others, and Chance scales; between males and females; as well as in their length of experience as secondary school counselors in Guidance and Counseling. Specifically the study sought to answer the following research questions:

What is the locus of control among the 32 fulltime secondary school counselors?

Is there any difference in their locus of control when grouped according to; (a) gender and (b) length of experience.

METHOD

Subjects

The subjects were full time counselors from secondary schools in Pulau Pinang with either diploma or degree in counseling. A total of 55 full time counselors were given the instruments, however, only 32 school counselors (74%) responded consisting of 11 males and 21 females with varying work experiences ranging from one to eleven years of school counseling. The subjects were divided into two groups, the first group had less than five years experience, while the second were those who had more than five years experience in Guidance and Counseling.

Instrument

The Levenson's multi-dimensional I, P, and C scales (Levenson, 1981) was used to assess the internal, powerful others, and chance locus of control for the counselors. The I, P, and C scales had eight items for each scale, with a 6-point Likert scaling (0-6) ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* {from - 3 to + 3}. In scoring the I, P, and C scales, 24 points is added as a constant value to the total score on each scale to eliminate the possible negative values. The score in each scale ranged from 0 to 48.

The three scales were presented to the respondents in a single questionnaire consisting of 24 items. According to Levenson (1981), the reliability index using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the internal consistency of the three scales revealed good reliability index at (.67) for I, (.82) for P, and (.79) for the C scale, respectively. For internal validity among the I, P, and C, the scales also indicated strong agreement between P and C with a reliability index ($r = .54$) at ($p < .01$). In addition, P and C scales showed a weak correlation with I scale ($r = .04$ and $.03$), indicating both are independent from each other. These results also reflected that the P and C scales controlled the person's belief in a non-personal orientation. Finally, factor analysis was done for the I, P, and C scales to test empirically whether the scale is a three-dimensional cluster.

According to Levenson (1981), the highest possible score for each I, P and C scales was 48 respectively. Theoretically, a high score in the internal locus of control scale means the respondents have control over ones life. The individual is likely to attribute success and failures to the internal or personal factors like efforts, motivation, knowledge and skills. On the other hand, the same theory holds that an individual who scores high on internal locus of control scores relatively low on the P and C scales. When this happens, it means that the individual believes that anybody or anything, or other factors will have much influence over his/her life.

Since Bahasa Melayu is the formal language used in Malaysia, the instrument (I, P, and C) was translated into the local language with the assistance of an English Language specialist who knows Bahasa Melayu. The final version of the translated instrument was reviewed by experts who had doctoral degrees in counseling and were proficient in both languages (English and Bahasa Melayu). The final translated version of the instrument was further given to two experts for the phase content validation. Furthermore, the items in each scale were content validated by two experts from psychology who were in agreement on the scales to measure locus of control among the counselors with a validity index of (.86). The reliability index was also determined using Cronbach's alpha for the internal consistency of the three scales which revealed (.42) (.54) and (.72) for the Internal, Powerful others, and Chance scales respectively.

Copies of the instrument were distributed to the counselors either in their schools or during a meeting. The research assistant explained the mechanics of the instruments for the respondents to the completed immediately. However, some opted to return it through mails.

Descriptive statistics were used to treat the data using means and standard deviations. T-test was also done to find out differences in the locus of control when grouped according to gender and length of experience.

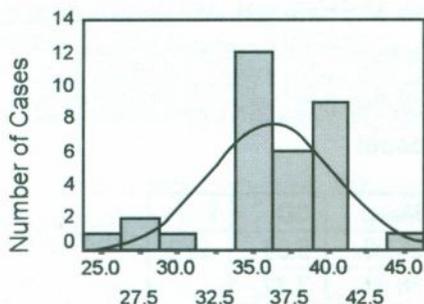
RESULTS

Table 1 shows the analysis on the I, P, and C scales which indicated higher mean score at (36.31) on internal locus of control, while for the powerful others at (18.41), and for the chance locus of control scales at (20.28) respectively, which reflected a lower value.

Table 1: Means Scores and Standard Deviations of the I, P, and C Locus of Control

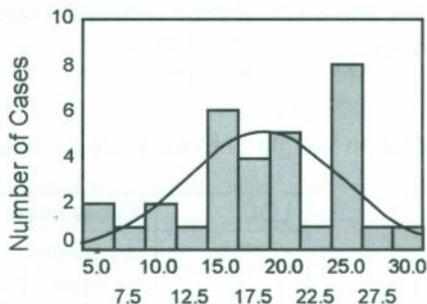
Variable	M of the Sample	M of the Scale	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Internal	36.31	24	4.14	-.878	1.225
Powerful Others	18.41	24	6.25	-.265	-.400
Chance	20.28	24	8.16	.166	.042

The distributions of the three scales is reflected in Figures 1, 2 and 3. The negative skewness of the distributions in the internal locus of control scores at (-.878) with a positive kurtosis (1.225) reflects a positive distribution. Figure 1 revealed that all the participants scored higher than the mean of the I scale. Likewise, the negative skewness of the distributions of powerful others locus of control at (-.265) with a negative kurtosis at (-.400) reflects a positive distribution. Figure 2 showed that 68.8% of the participants scored lower than the mean of the P scale. On the other hand, the positive skewness of the distribution of the chance locus of control scores at (.166) and the positive kurtosis (.042) reflects a negative distribution. Figure 3 showed that 68.8% of the participants scored lower than the mean of the C scale.



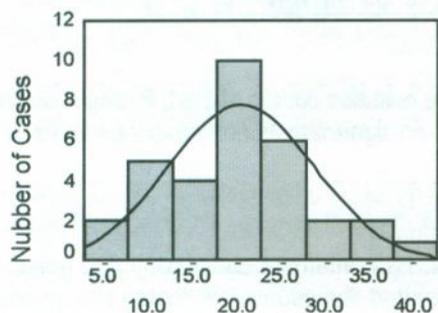
Internal LOC (I)

Fig. 1: Distribution of (I) Scores



Powerful others LOC (P)

Fig. 2: Distribution of (P) Scores



Chance LOC (C)

Fig. 3: Distribution of (C) Scores

Thus, as observed, the values reflected that the counselors had very high internal locus of control and were relatively low in the inexternal (Powerful others and Chance) locus of control.

Furthermore, table 2 showed the results of the T-test. The results revealed no significant differences in all three scales (Internal, Powerful others and Chance) in the locus of control between the male and female counselors.

Table 2. T-test for Gender in the Locus of control

LOC	Sex	N	Mean	SD	t
Internal	M	11	37.36	4.25	1.039
	F	21	35.76	4.07	
Powerful others	M	11	17.00	6.96	.917
	F	21	19.14	5.88	
Chance	M	11	16.91	7.66	.1745
	F	21	22.05	8.02	

p<.05

Table 3 showed the T-test results for length of experience that revealed no significant difference in the (Internal, Powerful others and Chance) locus of control among counselors who have less than those with more than five years of experience.

Table 3. T-test on Length of Experience in the Locus of control

LOC	Experience	N	Mean	SD	t
Internal	0-5 years	15	36.20	5.03	.270
	5+ years	17	36.41	3.32	
Powerful others	0-5 years	15	19.33	6.53	.743
	5+ years	17	17.59	6.06	
Chance	0-5 years	15	21.00	9.13	.438
	5+ years	17	19.65	7.42	

$p < .05$

The findings of the study reflected values on tables 2 & 3. The revealed scores of the I, P, and C scales showed that the counselors' gender and working experiences showed no significant difference in their locus of control.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study showed that the 32 full-time counselors have internal locus of control as reflected by their high scores on the internal locus of control scale. On the other hand, the counselors scored low on both external (Powerful others and Chance) locus of control subscales reflecting an internal locus of control type individuals who are hardworking and attributes success and failures in conducting effective counseling session to personal or internal factors. This shows that the counselors have better control of their own behavior and tends to exhibit more diplomatic behaviors during the counseling sessions. In addition, this means they continue to improve themselves in terms of knowledge and skills. Majority of the full time counselors having internal locus of control, an advantage to the schools and its students to have counselors with such characteristics. Likewise, findings of this study showed gender and length of experience do not have influence on the counselors' locus of control. This information is beneficial for educators, administrators and policy makers knowing that job requirements for school counselors need not to be gender specific with a particular level of experience.

The results of the study are also consistent with the studies of Cheng (1994), Gains (1996) Koiner (1992) and Mwamwenda (1995) corroborating no significant difference on gender and job tenure in the locus of control. Sadowski's (1993), however, obtained a different and opposite result. This was attributed to the belief of Malaysia's high standard program for psychology and counseling.

In general, these results does not stereotype any specific group of people (i.e. gender) in Malaysia. Each individual citizen has equal degree of freedom and is not directly and coercively being controlled or influenced by other people. Subsequently, many people more likely attribute success and failures to their internal or personal factors rather than uncontrollable external factors.

Furthermore, the importance of Guidance and Counseling in Psychology is increasing with its functions and services to the schools. To meet these expectations, the school counselors in Malaysia were well trained and equipped by their respective institutions. High quality programs were provided to ensure that these counselors developed attributes, personalities and characteristics associated with internal locus of control such as hard working diplomatic behavior, and self-regulated actions. In summary, the study rewarded several favorable findings.

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