



Examining the Role of Locus of Control in Achievement Motivation of Special Education Trainees

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ABSTRACT

Background: Achievement motivation, as defined by Atkinson (1966), is the intrinsic impetus that drives individuals to seek greatness, surmount obstacles, and improve problem-solving skills. Motivation is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic influences. Locus of control, an important personality concept, denotes the extent to which individuals attribute outcomes to their activities (internal locus) vs. external factors such as fate, luck, or influential persons (external locus). Individuals possessing an internal locus of control are more inclined to assume responsibility for their actions, whereas those with an external locus frequently ascribe results to external factors. The objective of this study was to evaluate the correlation between locus of control and achievement motivation in young people. **Methods:** The sample consisted of 80 volunteers (N=80) aged 17 to 30 years, chosen via convenience sampling. Standardized instruments, specifically the Locus of Control Scale and the Achievement Motivation Scale, were utilized to assess the constructs. A correlational analysis was performed to ascertain the relationship between the two variables. **Results:** The findings indicated a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.512$, signifying a considerable negative



and statistically significant association between locus of control and achievement motivation. The study concludes that persons with an external locus of control generally demonstrate diminished levels of achievement drive. These findings underscore the need for cultivating internal control beliefs to improve goal-oriented behaviour and motivation for success.

Introduction

Achievement motivation is a fundamental concept in psychology that elucidates why individuals establish goals, strive for accomplishment, and persist in their efforts despite challenges. It signifies an intrinsic motivation to execute activities proficiently, enhance performance, and get personal fulfillment from significant achievements (McClelland, 1987). Achievement motivation, as contrasted to broad motivation that may arise from diverse needs or goals, explicitly pertains to an individual's pursuit of excellence and mastery. Individuals with elevated accomplishment motivation generally opt for projects of intermediate difficulty—objectives that are achievable yet demand effort—exhibiting a propensity for growth while mitigating the chance of failure.

Atkinson (1966) broadened this viewpoint by illustrating that achievement-oriented behavior encompasses both individual traits and social factors. This concept posits that human ambition, persistence, and intrinsic motivations function in conjunction with extrinsic influences, including cultural norms, familial support, and peer acknowledgement. This interaction highlights that achievement motivation is not solely an intrinsic characteristic; it evolves through active engagement with the surrounding environment. In practical environments like educational institutions, workplaces, athletic arenas, and entrepreneurial ventures, achievement motivation is manifested when individuals establish explicit objectives, react positively to feedback, and perceive both successes and failures as significant learning opportunities (Elliot & Church, 1997).

Researchers have emphasized that achievement motivation functions through many orientations. Mastery orientation prioritizes learning, skill enhancement, and personal development, whereas performance orientation focuses on comparison, acknowledgment, and incentives. Furthermore, approach-oriented drive propels individuals toward achievement, while avoidance-oriented motivation signifies a wish to avert failure or censure. These motivational patterns frequently intersect and influence behavior in educational, professional, and personal contexts. Numerous psychological aspects, such as self-efficacy,



goal-setting mechanisms, intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, and feedback interpretations, additionally affect motivation. Notable theoretical frameworks—including McClelland's Need Achievement Theory, Weiner's Attribution Theory, Eccles and Wigfield's Expectancy-Value Theory, and Locke and Latham's Goal-Setting Theory—underscore that achievement motivation is influenced by expectations, beliefs, and contextual factors.

The locus of control idea, established by Rotter (1966), enhances accomplishment motivation by elucidating how individuals ascribe the origins of their outcomes. Locus of control denotes an individual's perception of whether life events are determined by their actions (internal locus) or by external factors such as chance or destiny (external locus). An internal locus of control is typically linked to increased accountability, perseverance, and effective coping mechanisms. In contrast, an external locus of control is frequently associated with inactivity, learned helplessness, and dependence on other factors. For instance, academically challenged pupils with an internal locus may enhance their preparatory efforts, while those with an external orientation may ascribe failure to uncontrollable events.

The formation of locus of control is influenced by various factors, including parental approaches, societal norms, and individual experiences. Authoritative parenting methods, which foster autonomy and accountability, frequently enhance a more robust internal orientation (Baumrind, 1991). Consistent success derived from effort bolsters internal control beliefs, whereas erratic or unpredictable results enhance external orientations (Lefcourt, 2014). Cultural contexts significantly influence behavior: individualistic civilizations promote internal control, while collectivistic cultures prioritize external attributions (Cheng et al., 2013). Educational and organizational settings that foster autonomy and decision-making concurrently enhance internal control views.

Comprehensive studies have established the correlation between achievement motivation and locus of control. Individuals possessing an internal locus of control typically exhibit elevated accomplishment motivation, as they perceive a clear correlation between effort and outcomes (Findley & Cooper, 1983). Conversely, individuals with an external locus may perceive themselves as less accountable for outcomes, so diminishing their incentive to persevere or enhance their performance. Wolk and DuCette (1973) discovered that accomplishment motivation forecasts performance chiefly when associated with an internal orientation, indicating that locus of control acts as a moderating variable. Gifford et al. (2006) similarly found that students possessing internal control beliefs demonstrated increased motivation, enhanced academic engagement, and superior performance, mostly attributable to their resilience and problem-focused coping techniques.



Achievement motivation and locus of control are interrelated factors that together influence behavior, performance, and personal growth. Achievement motivation compels individuals to pursue perfection, whereas locus of control affects their interpretation of triumphs and failures. Collectively, these dimensions elucidate the reasons for individual differences in perseverance, coping mechanisms, and goal-oriented behavior. Comprehending this link holds profound implications for educational, organizational, and developmental interventions designed to augment motivation and resilience. This study aims to investigate the correlation between achievement motivation and locus of control in young people, focusing on how these psychological characteristics interact to affect behavior and outcomes.

Aims and Objectives

1. The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation among trainees of special education.
2. To assess the level of locus of control among special education trainees working with children with hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), and intellectual disability (ID).
3. The purpose of this study is to assess the level of achievement motivation among special education trainees working with children who have hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), and intellectual disability (ID).

Rationale

Although numerous studies have examined the correlation between locus of control and achievement motivation, most have focused on students in conventional academic environments. Research on this correlation among special education trainees is scarce, despite the critical importance of motivation in their training to assist children with exceptional needs. Most prior research concentrated on academic performance, goal orientation, or life satisfaction, employing restricted age ranges and diverse samples, so resulting in a deficiency in understanding the motivational factors specific to special education students. Furthermore, access to research about this group in India is restricted and difficult. Considering the increasing incidence of children with special needs and the limited resources available for their assistance, it is essential to investigate the motivational orientations and control beliefs of special education trainees, as these factors profoundly influence their preparedness and willingness to aid this population.

Methodology



The present research utilized a descriptive research design using a quantitative survey method to examine the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation among special education teacher trainees. A total of 80 participants, enrolled in special education diploma programs for hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), and intellectual disability (ID), were selected through convenience sampling from the Vision Institute of Applied Science. The inclusion criteria required participants to be between 17 and 30 years of age, enrolled in a special education diploma program, willing to participate, and representing both male and female trainees, while individuals above 30 years of age and those pursuing distance learning programs were excluded. Locus of control was treated as the independent variable, and achievement motivation was the dependent variable. Data were collected using two standardized instruments: the Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966), consisting of 29 statements with forced-choice responses and a score range of 0–23, and the Achievement Motivation Scale (Deo & Mohan, 1985), comprising 50 items rated on a five-point Likert scale with both positive and reverse-scored items. Prior to administration, the study objectives were explained to institutional authorities and participants, rapport was established, and informed consent was obtained. Participants were instructed to respond honestly, without time restrictions, and assured of confidentiality. The tests were administered and scored strictly according to their respective manuals. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's product-moment correlation to assess the relationship between the variables. Ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, avoidance of harm, transparency, and participant debriefing, were adhered to throughout the study.

TOOLS USED:

1. Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966): The Locus of Control Scale, developed by Rotter, is used to determine the degree to which people view events as under their control versus being controlled by external forces such as fate or luck. The scale consists of 29 forced-choice items, of which 6 are fillers. The scale yields a score from 0 to 23, with higher scores indicating a more external locus of control. The scale is well-known for its reliability.

2. Achievement Motivation Scale (Deo & Mohan, 1985): The Achievement Motivation Scale, created by Deo and Mohan, is a scale that determines the level of an individual's need for achievement and persistence in goal-directed activities. The scale has a total of 50 items, with 37 items being positive and 13 items being negative. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale. The scale has a good test-retest reliability of 0.69 and is widely used in educational and psychological studies.

Statistical Analysis

For the analysis of the data, SPSS was used, and descriptive statistics were employed to analyse the demographic variables and the scores obtained on the scales, while the Pearson correlation was used to establish the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation. The method of analysis used was capable of testing the objectives and hypotheses proposed.

RESULTS:

Table 1. Showing the Relationship between Locus of Control and Achievement Motivation

Variable	Mean	Std. deviation	N	R
Locus of Control	9.81	3.152	64	-.512**
Achievement Motivation	155.36	17.355	64	-.512**

** correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The above table shows the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation. The correlation coefficient (r) between locus of control and achievement motivation is -0.512 , which shows a moderate negative and strongly significant relationship between the two variables. The lower score of locus of control indicates the internal locus of control, which shows that achievement motivation is strongly related to the internal locus of control.

Discussion and Interpretation:

The present study aimed to examine the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation among trainees of special education, specifically those working with hearing impairment (HI), visual impairment (VI), and intellectual disability (ID). The results showed a moderate, negative, and statistically significant correlation ($r = -.512$) between locus of control and achievement motivation. This means that people with a stronger internal locus of control are more motivated to achieve than people with an external locus of control. This outcome points out the importance of personal responsibility, self-regulation, and intrinsic drive in fostering success among teacher trainees preparing to work with children with special needs.



Achievement motivation, as posited by Atkinson's Achievement Motivation Theory (1966), emphasizes the role of internal and external factors in shaping an individual's persistence and problem-solving ability. For special education trainees, achievement motivation is connected to both personal development and the professional duty of serving vulnerable groups. A trainee with an internal locus of control is more likely to perceive challenges—such as managing classroom diversity or addressing complex learning needs—as opportunities to enhance competence rather than as insurmountable obstacles. This aligns with the findings of Bosworth and Murray (1983), who demonstrated that children with dyslexia exhibited lower internal locus of control, which negatively impacted their achievement motivation and fostered learned helplessness. Conversely, individuals with internal control orientations tend to build resilience, an essential quality for teachers in special education.

The negative correlation between locus of control and achievement motivation observed in this study further resonates with earlier research. Batlis and Waters (1973) examined college students and found that achievement motivation strongly influenced academic performance, although locus of control alone did not act as a significant moderator. Their findings highlight that achievement-related outcomes may rely more on a combination of personal drive and internalized beliefs about control. In the present study, this interplay becomes particularly relevant, as trainees with an internal locus of control may attribute success to their own effort and persistence, thereby reinforcing their motivation to excel in special education settings.

Consider a practical example of two special education trainees: one with a predominantly internal locus of control and another with an external locus. The internally oriented trainee may attribute the success of a student with hearing impairment to their own teaching strategies, adapting methods, and continuous effort. This perception strengthens their confidence and sustains their motivation to refine instructional practices. In contrast, the externally oriented trainee may attribute the same student's progress to luck, institutional resources, or uncontrollable circumstances. Such beliefs can diminish their sense of agency, potentially lowering their motivation to experiment with innovative teaching techniques. Over time, these contrasting outlooks can shape professional growth trajectories in profoundly different ways.

Moreover, the findings of this study have broader implications for educational psychology and teacher training. Internally oriented individuals are more inclined to seek feedback, engage in self-reflection, and set realistic but challenging goals, all of which are vital to developing achievement motivation (Findley & Cooper, 1983). In the Indian context, where research on locus of control and achievement motivation among special education trainees remains limited, these findings call attention to the importance of



structured interventions that promote internal control orientations. Workshops on self-efficacy, resilience-building, and reflective teaching practices could equip trainees to handle the demanding responsibilities associated with special education more effectively.

Limitations and Future Implications

However, despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The application of convenience sampling from a single institution limits the generalizability of the results. In addition, the use of self-report measures may have introduced response bias, where the participants may have portrayed themselves more positively. Future studies should extend their samples to a wide range of institutions and should also apply longitudinal designs to explore the relationship between locus of control and achievement motivation across time. In addition, the application of qualitative approaches, such as interviews or case studies, may offer more details about the experiences of special education trainees.

In practice, the results emphasize the need for the integration of psychological training modules that enhance the internal locus of control and achievement motivation of teachers in teacher education programs. This may help prepare teachers more effectively to confront the challenges in their profession, which in turn could lead to better outcomes for students with special needs.

Conclusion:

The current study finds a statistically significant negative correlation ($r = -.512$) between locus of control and achievement motivation among trainees in special education. This is because an internal locus of control is linked to high achievement motivation, where people credit their success to their efforts and display persistence in the face of obstacles. On the other hand, people who display an external locus of control may attribute their success to luck, fate, or external factors, which may reduce their motivation to achieve and their willingness to take responsibility for their progress.

The special education field, where teacher trainees encounter challenging and demanding tasks, finds significance in these results. The promotion of an internal locus of control could potentially strengthen confidence, resilience, and problem-solving skills, which could, in turn, improve personal and professional outcomes. It is essential to remember, however, that correlation does not necessarily imply causation and that other variables may also affect achievement motivation.

Future studies should seek to generalize these findings by using larger and more representative samples and by employing longitudinal designs to better understand the interplay between locus of control and



achievement motivation. Increasing these psychological traits may help to improve training programs and educational experiences for students with special needs.

Declaration of Competing Interest:

None

Financial Disclosure:

None

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