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Chronic Stress in Relation to Locus of Control

Kendra Clark
kmc6xc@mail.umsl.edu

Miranda Jany
University of Missouri-St. Louis, mnjd45@mail.umsl.edu

Carissa Philippi
University of Missouri-St. Louis, philippic@umsl.edu

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Stress is prominent in everyone's lives, and if the right precautions are not taken, stress can become chronic and harmful to an individual's health (Schmitz, Neumann, & Oppermann, 2000). To prevent chronic stress, researchers seek to find out important factors that lead to chronic stress. One of the most prominent factors leading to chronic stress is locus of control (LOC), or how much control people feel they have over situations (Cummins, 1988). People can endorse an internal locus of control which means individual attributes events occurring in their life to their own behavior, or an external, which one would consider an outside force responsible for an event that occurred in their life (Bollini, Walker, Hamann, & Kestler, 2004). There are mixed results in the literature regarding different forms of stress and locus of control. Some results indicate that external locus of control is related to higher stress levels (Schmitz et al. 2000), some results indicate that a more internal locus of control is related to higher stress (Cummins, 1988), while others found no significant relationship (Bollini et al. 2004). For this experiment, researchers wanted to examine the relationship between type of locus of control and amount of chronic stress. It was predicted that greater external locus of control would be associated with increased chronic stress. In the present study, UMSL students ($n=81$) completed the Life Stressors Checklist to measure amount of stress exposure, as well as the Locus of Control Scale to measure if participants had more internal or external locus of control. We found that LOC was not correlated with levels of chronic stress ($F(1,79)=0.049, p>0.05$). Although a significant relationship was not found, it is still important that individuals learn to manage stress, because stress presents itself similarly, no matter which perception of control an individual possesses (Bollini et al. 2004).