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The relationship between locus of control (internal – external) and happiness in pre-elementary teachers in Iran

Hassan Fahim Devin^{a*}, Faranak Ghahramanlou^b, Ahmad Fooladian^c, Zahra Zohoorian^d^a *Department of physical education and sport science, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran*^b *Student of social science (Family studies), Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran*^c *Department of sociology, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran*^d *Department of Languages, Mashhad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Mashhad, Iran*

Abstract

The present study attempts to investigate the relationship between Locus of control (Loc) and happiness through determining Loc orientation and measuring the rate of happiness. For this purpose 84 pre-elementary teachers in the city of Mashhad were asked to respond to three questionnaires including : Oxford's happiness, Rotter's Loc and selective individual traits. Data was analyzed by using descriptive statistics and the main objectives of the study were obtained through Pearson's correlation and independent "t" tests. Results revealed a significant negative relationship between these two variables. Moreover, There were significant differences among teachers with various educational background regarding Loc and happiness.

Keywords: Locus of control, Happiness, Pre-elementary teachers

1. Introduction

The term Locus of Control was coined by Rotter during 1960s. Loc, sometimes called control of reinforcement, includes two dimensions of external Locus of control and internal Locus of control. Loc is conceptualized as being inherent in a dynamic bi-polar continuum ranging from internal to external, and it represents the tendency to relate success and difficulties either to internal factors such as effort or to external factors such as chance. If individuals incline to observe that reinforcement results from their own behavior, they are considered to possess internal Locus of control. If individuals tend to see fate, luck, or powerful others as being responsible for reinforcements, rather than their own behavior, they possess external Locus of control (Rockstraw,2006).

The other variable studied in this research was happiness which encompasses various facets and manifestations. In fact, it is a mental state of well-being which has been viewed from different perspectives such as psychological, religious, philosophical, and biological. Thus, different approaches have attempted to define happiness and discover its sources. Happiness is a positive emotion of feeling which is described by words like contentment, wellbeing, and

Hassan Fahim Devin. Tel.: +0-915-311-6896
E-mail address: fahim_pe@yahoo.com

satisfaction. In today's modern and competitive world, especially in the field of teaching every teacher is facing stress and anxiety and everyone's goal is to obtain happiness. In the present study an effort has been made to study whether LOC and its sub-dimensions correlate to happiness. To the best of our knowledge, however, there seems to be paucity of research work addressing LOC and happiness in this population. Thus, the present study seeks to add to the body of knowledge available in this area.

Locus of control (LOC) as the framework of Rotter's social learning theory of personality is defined as a generalized belief about the contingency between one's action and the actual outcome brought about through social learning mechanism (Rotter, 1966). One's LOC may either be internal or external. Rotter(1990) defines external and internal Locus of control as :“The degree to which persons expect that a reinforcement or an outcome of their behaviour is contingent on their own behaviour or personal characteristics versus the degree to which persons expect that the reinforcement or outcome is a function of chance, luck, or fate, is under the control of powerful others” (p.489)

In the framework of LOC, an internally oriented person is more willing to do actions (Hoffman et al., 2003). Thus, they commit to tasks which are risky, innovative, and difficult (Hollenbeck et al., 1989), Howell and Avolio 1993). They look for tasks which require personal control (Brenders 1987). While internals believe in their own abilities, they try to set goals and also control events (Phillips and Gully 1997). Moreover, most of their efforts are for mastering situations (Brenders 1987). On the other hand, externals escape difficult tasks and situations specifically the ones which require active participation (Hoffman et al., 2003). Externals believe that they do not have the skills to be effective in different situations (Larson et al., 1990). In fact, internal individuals believe that they are individually responsible for outcomes; whereas external people believe that outcomes are controlled by something other than luck, chance, or other more powerful beings.

Various research groups, including positive psychology endeavour to apply the scientific method to answer the question about what happiness is and what the correlates of happiness are. Happiness is generally defined in terms of the average level of satisfaction over a specific time period, the frequency and degree of positive affect manifestations and the relative absence of negative affect (Argyle et al., 1989).

There are some social and psychological contributors to help people do that. One of those contributors is internal LOC. It is observed that individuals with internal LOC who believe that events are under their own control, are more satisfied with their life to those of externally LOC individuals who believe that events are controlled by external factors such as fate or luck. Many studies have found a positive association between internal LOC and happiness (Lu and shin, 1997, Myers and Diener, 1995) , Dicle and Karayart (2008). Yukura et al., (1993) found out that individuals being oriented towards internal LOC were happier in comparison with those who had higher feelings of external Locus of Control. The subjects included 275 undergraduates. Thus, the results could be generalized to the population of students. In a similar study, Pannells and Claxton (2008) found a significant difference on the results from the happiness measure concerning the externally- oriented and internally-oriented control. Their study included 171 university students. However, the results of another study carried out in Ireland by Sindane (2011) confirmed a weak relationship between happiness and Locus of Control. Their study included 131 subjects over 18 years of age up to 52. Thus, the subjects did not only include students.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants were 84 pre-elementary female teachers of 25 to 49 years old (M=38, SD = 38.631). Who were selected randomly working in different geographically placed pre-elementary schools.

2.2. Measures

Locus of control

Rotter's (1966) Loc questionnaire was used to obtain data on teachers' type of LOC. The instrument consisted of 13 items dealing exclusively with the subject's beliefs about the nature of the world. The participants had to choose the statement that clearly described the situation for them as being internal or external concerning Loc.

2.3. Happiness

Oxford happiness inventory (Argyle et al., 1989) was used to measure general psychological causes of happiness.

2.4. Educational background

Level of education was obtained with asking the participants to mark, whether they have diploma, sassociate, bachelor, or a doctorate degree.

3. Statistical analysis and Results

Statistical analysis were done by using pearon's correlation and independent "t" test. The first statistical analysis to be performed was coefficient alpha to measure the reliability of the instruments. Although the instruments were proven to be reliable and have been used since the mid twentieth century, reliability tests were needed for this study, since the instruments were translated into Farsi, and were used in a different culture at a different span of time. An internal consistency estimate was computed for the two instruments and the alpha value for Locus of control and happiness were respectively, 0.90, 0.80

Descriptive statistics, correlation and independent "t" tests :

Means and standard deviation for age, work experience and the main variables of the study are presented in table1. Pearson's correlations (Table 2) were Performed to examine the relationship between Loc with happiness and it's sub-dimensions and the relationship of Loc and happiness with age and work experience were also examined. Loc was positively correlated with happiness and its sub dimensions ($p < 0.05$) Teachers in this survey were more internally oriented in terms of Loc and believed that success in life and work were achieved through their own abilities and efforts rather than good or bad luck or other people. This finding is in line with those of pannell and Claxton (2008), Dicle (2008) and Sindane (2011). No correlations were observed among Loc and happiness with age and work experience ($p > 0.05$). furthermore, as it is demonstrated in table 3, significant differences at the level of $\alpha = 0.05$ were observed between participants with various educational backgrounds regarding the mean of Loc and happiness. The more educated the teachers were the internally oriented they were in terms of Loc, and the more happier they felt. Higher education gives a person a feeling of self- esteem and self-worth and probably makes them more satisfied with life. Therefore, a strong positive relationship between job status/ income / wealth and happiness is expected.

Table 1: statistical indexes of quantative variables of the study

Variable	Age	Work experience	Loc	Happiness	Satisfaction	Vigor	Enjoyment t	Achievement t	Health
N	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84	84
Missing Data	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
mean	38.6310	13.191	5.1064	42.4000	6.5476	6.285	7.1310	8.1071	10.5714
median	39.0000	13.000	5.0000	42.0000	6.0000	6.000	8.0000	9.0000	10.0000
mode	42.00	10.00	5.00	42.00	9.00	6.00	8.00	9.00	10.00
Std. Deviation	5.87988	7.6450	3.82484	25.30490	3.56491	3.24	3.98122	4.10412	4.79529
variance	34.573	58.446	14.629	640.338	12.709	10.54	15.850	16.844	22.995
minimum	25	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
maximum	49.00	28.00	13.00	85.00	12.00	10.00	13.00	14	17

Possible minimum	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible maximum	-	-	13	87	12	12	15	15	18

Table 2: correlation between LOC with Happiness , age and work experience.

Indexes variable	N	R	p-value
Loc and Happiness	84	-0.735	0.000
Loc and satisfaction	84	-0.932	0.000
Loc and vigor	84	-0.507	0.005
Loc and enjoyment	84	-0.454	0.026
Loc and achievement	84	-0.799	0.00
Loc and health	84	-0.751	0.00
Age and Loc	84	0.157	0.208
Age and happiness	84	0.094	0.315
Work experience and Loc	84	0.042	0.446
Work experience and happiness	84	0.068	0.078

Table3: comparison of Loc and happiness in participants with various Educational background

Variable Indexes	Group	No	Mean	SD	F	t	df	p-value
Happiness	Diploma & Associate	34	40.7353	23.24352	.408	2.225	82	.029
	Bachelor & Master	50	52.6000	24.48656				
LOC	Diploma & Associate	34	6.4600	2.25314	14.122	2.197	82	.035
	Bachelor & Master	50	4.8824	3.74825				

4. Discussion

The current study explored the links between Loc and happiness in pre-elementary teachers . The findings confirmed that teachers were more internally oriented in terms of Loc and there was a significant positive relationship between LOC and happiness among teachers.

There are many social and biological factors deterring the level of happiness , mental health status of a person's at any point of time. There are also specific psychological and personality factors such as Loc which make people happy and vulnerable to mental health.

Living a more satisfying and happy life is directly dependent on how accurate our Loc is. Through exerting effort on doing, we gain power and concluding our happiness and well-being is maximized in its best way. People who have an internal Loc believe that they are responsible for their own behaviours and their results based on their own personal decision and efforts. Having an internal Loc produces a "can do" attitude. That is, Their people with internal Loc do not spend time bemoaning for the fact that something had happened to them. They look for decisive action opportunities to turn things around. Based on the results of the study makes two key contributions could be made to the literature on mental health especially on happiness as part of positive psychology. The first contribution is that the study was conducted on pre-elementary teachers while the earlier studies focused mainly on college students and elderly people. secondly, the work context of the study was in pre-elementary school which included working with children who are in no cent and fresh being as well as working with music and physical actives; while, in other previous studies the work context mainly included environmental as well as work related stresses.

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