

The Effect of Locus of Control on Job Performance: An Empirical Study of Executive Level Employees in a Selected Sri Lankan Apparel Organization

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of Locus of Control (LOC) on the work-related job performance in Sri Lanka. Subjects were drawn from a pool of apparel sector executives who completed a questionnaire made up of valid and reliable instruments that measured each of the variables studied. The study was conducted on a sample of 168 executive level employees that was randomly selected from a sample frame of the selected apparel organization. The data was mainly analyzed by using the analytical software SPSS version 23 that provided more meaning and validated results. The findings indicate that one aspect of an executive's (Apparel sector) personality, as measured by locus of control, plays an important role in predicting the level of job performance in a selected apparel organization in Sri Lanka. Executives with a higher internal locus of control are more likely to have higher levels of job performance. Further it reveals that there is a significant difference between male and female executive employees with regard to degree of locus of control. Consequently, this study extends the locus of control literature by examining the relationship of locus of control with job performance and gender difference.

Key Words: Apparel Organization, Executive Employees, Job Performance, Locus of Control, Sex Difference, Sri Lanka

Introduction

Locus of control is an important variable for the explanation of human resource behavior in organizations as it is a key predictor of various work-related outcomes. It is a personality trait (Opatha, 2015), and it is a fundamental individual difference variable that defines individuals' beliefs about the degree of control that they have over the events, phenomenon in their lives (Galvin, Randel, Collins, and Johnson, 2018). Researchers have mentioned that few research studies have been done with regard to locus of control in Sri Lanka, perhaps in Asia (Opatha and Opatha, 2019). Thus, it is revealed that a contextual gap exists with regard to locus of control and how it affects the work-related outcomes such as job performance.

Identifying different personalities by the managers in an organization is an important ability and a critical factor in taking decisions, facing challenges and it directly contributes to success or failure on the job performance. According to Perera (2019), Job performance can be explained as an individual contribution to achieve the overall performance of an organization to enhance the final objectives. Job performance is a critical outcome of HRM. If employees do not generate the expected job performance there will be serious consequences including increased customer dissatisfaction, reduced profits, and increased employee grievances. Employee grievances have many unfavorable consequences (Opatha, 1994; Akuratiyagamage and Opatha, 2004) and which have reversed negative effects on job performance. Therefore, this research paper is focused on finding the effect of locus of control on job performance and the findings of this study will provide an insight into the existing theory of locus of control and job performance. Consequently, this study extends the locus of control literature by examining the relationship between locus of control and job performance.

Problem of the Study

Apparel industry in Sri Lanka is considered as a major income earner in the Sri Lankan economy. The apparel industry is currently facing number of challenges in today's modern and highly competitive industrial context in Sri Lanka. Hence the apparel industry should have productive human resources to face and overcome those challenges. More effective and profitable organizations are built-up by talented, qualified, and trainee employees. Thus, managers are in a greater difficulty of attracting suitable employees (personality) and identifying individual differences in the organization and with regards to that if there is poor management it will be facing a considerably lower level of job performance. Hence it should identify and explore work-related traits of personality to make productive decisions.

Locus of control (personality trait) is a fundamental individual difference variable and it was conceptualized as the extent to which people believe that the results, rewards or reinforcement that people receive in life can be controlled by their own personal beliefs or actions (Wang, Bowling, and Eschleman, 2010). According the organizational behavioral literature, locus of control was a key predictor (key personality trait) of various work-related outcome. Thus, according to Opatha (2015) it is very important to know the degree of the locus of control within the employees of the organization, as it is helpful for managers or supervisors to identify whether an employee (subordinate) is an internalized one or an externalized one before taking certain decisions in managing people at work and

it will affect productive work outcome. Meanwhile, identifying internality and externality is useful for making right decisions in staffing which includes recruitment, selection, hiring, and induction, and training and development.

As such, this study was carried out with the primary objective to scrutinize the effect of locus of control on job performance of apparel executive employees in a selected organization. Secondly, this research tried to investigate whether there is any significant difference between male and female executive employees in the selected apparel organization with regard to degree of locus of control.

Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Locus of Control

In 1966 Rotter and his colleagues examined and developed the concept of locus of control from Rotter's (1954) social learning theory (Paul and Spector, 1982). Brownell (1982) indicated that locus of control is how far one accepts personal responsibility for what happens to them. A person's perception about his fate source is known as locus of control (Robbins and Stephen, 2003). Sekaran (2004) explained locus of control as a concept that has to do with whether people believe that they are in control of events or events control them. Therefore, this definition highlights that in the lives of humans there are many events and those events can be controlled by people or those events can control people. Locus of Control is how far an individual believes that his or her actions determine his or her outcomes obtained in life (success, getting promoted, job performance, achievement of a qualification, success of the marriage etc.) (Opatha, 2014; Opatha, 2015). According to pioneer authors in the available organizational behavioral literature (Umstot, 1984; Sekaran, 2004; Nelson and Quick, 1997; Greenberg and Baron, 2008; Lussier, 2010; McShane and Glinow, 2013; Opatha, 2015), it is possible to identify two types of Locus of Control. They are Internal Locus of Control and External Locus of Control.

Opatha (2015, p. 42) writes:

"It is possible to classify individuals into two main categories, i.e., internals (individuals with internal locus of control) and externals (individuals with external locus of control). Internal locus of control is possessed by an individual who believes that he or she controls his or her destiny (what happens to him or her in life). External locus of control is possessed by an individual who believes that other factors (other people, situations, luck etc.) determine his or her destiny."

It reveals that there are two types of locus of control in existence. Internal locus of control means that an individual thinks and believes that he can control reinforcing events and the outcomes in life and under external locus of control, a person thinks and believes that reinforcement follows some action and other's action but is not always due to his/her actions. Individuals with external locus of control think that reinforcement is because of chance, fate and luck or is unpredictable due to the complex nature of the events.

Job Performance

Job performance is the single outcome of an employee's work (Hunter, 1986). It is the behaviour, outcomes and results that employees engage in and are responsible for bringing about things are linked with and contribute to organizational goals and objectives (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2000) and it is the extent to which duties and responsibilities have been carried out (Opatha, 2015). According to Koopmans, Bernard, Hildebrandt, Buuren, Beek, and De Vet (2013) dimensions of job performance can be explained as task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour. Task performance means the competency or the proficiency with which one performs tasks of his or her central job. Contextual performance means individual behaviours that support the organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function, and counterproductive work behavior can be defined as behavior that harms or damages the well-being of the organization.

The Effect of Locus of Control on Job Performance

In literature, many studies determined that there is a positive correlation between LOC and job performance (Michna, 2009). It was examined and identified by the researchers that LOC is a significant predictor of job satisfaction and job performance (Judge, Erez, Bono, and Thoresen, 2003). Locus of control is a vital trait for employee's effort to achieve both individual and work-related goals and objectives (Mamlin, Harris, and Case, 2011).

Individuals with an internal LOC believe that an event which can be controlled does not necessarily result in a reduction in stress and a wide range of work outcomes, i.e., well-being, motivation and behavior (Skinner, 1996). In an empirical study, Chen and Silverthorne (2008) examined and identified that internal LOC increases the job performance of individuals who represent a sample of 209 Certified Public Accountants. Individuals with internal LOC have higher work satisfaction than externals and that influences the job performance and the motivational processes (Bowling, Eschleman, Wang, Kirkendall, and Alarcon, 2010). DeNeve and Cooper (1998) found that external locus of control was negatively related to subjective well-being. Thus, it will negatively affect work satisfaction and job performance too. Research also suggests that people who score higher on external locus of control tend to experience more negative emotions with passive outcomes.

Thus, internals seem to be better than externals in terms of job performance. According to above-mentioned observations, explanations, findings, arguments and suggestions it reveals that the type of locus of control that needs to be possessed by an employee who wants to be successful is internal locus of control. Based on the above information the following hypothesis was developed.

H₁- There is a positive effect of Internal Locus of Control on Job performance.

Sex Difference in Locus of Control

According to Higgs and Williams (1997), it is important to examine locus of control differences between males and females. According to McGhee and Crandall (1968), a greater number of women are entering to the labour force and they are competing for jobs which previously had been reserved for men. Modern women workforce highly

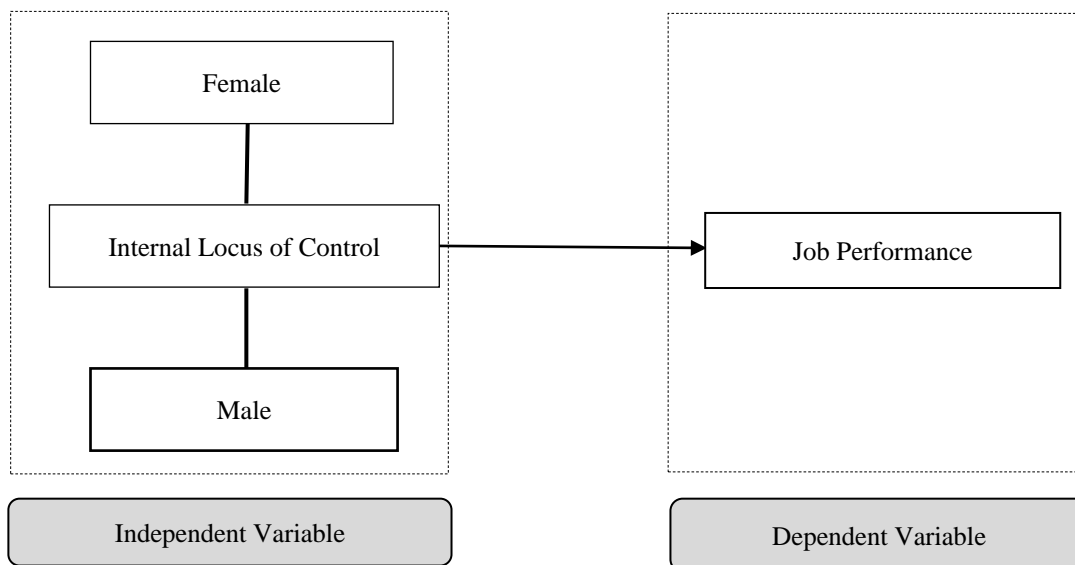
contributes to gross domestic production of a country. Thus, gender difference is vital and here their entry into labour force is an increasing interest in the study of sex differences on locus of control and their impact on job performance. As another aspect Marks (1998) demonstrated that the existence of certain group affiliation, as gender and ethnic affiliation was a factor that has an effect on the type of Locus of control. Reitz and Jewell (1979) identified a negative relationship between sex and locus of control. Feather (1967) showed that females earned significantly higher external scores than males. Based on the above facts the following hypothesis was developed.

H₂- There is a significant difference between male and female executive employees with regards to degree of Locus of Control.

Conceptual Framework

By reviewing the prevailing literature, a conceptual framework of the study was developed and it is depicted in Figure 1. In the conceptual framework internal locus of control was considered as the independent variable while job performance was considered as the dependent variable.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



Method

Study Design

According to Sekaran and Bogie (2010) population refers total of all the individuals who have certain characteristics and are of interest to a researcher to investigate. Participants of this study include all the executive level employees working in a selected apparel company. The selected company comprises of four plants in Sri Lanka and three plants in India. Three plants in India were excluded from the study because of the difficulties in reachability. As per the feasibility of data collection, only all the executives of the four plants in Sri Lanka were considered for the study as the population. Information about executive level employees was collected through the central HR department of the

company. Around 291 executive level employees were working within these four plants. Hence, the population size was 291 elements.

Sample is a subset of population which comprises of some members selected from the population. Some elements of the population would form the sample (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010). In this study population size is too large and hence it was difficult to collect data from each element especially due to the cost, time and other people related limitations. The sample size of the population is 168 which was determined based on the recommendations given by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The questionnaire was administered to 210 members by selecting members from each plant because it is impossible to consider a 100% response rate. The researcher was able to gather responses from 168 participants. Accordingly based on the stratified sampling method 168 executive level employees comprising of participants from each plant were selected as the sample size for the purpose of gathering data.

Scale and Validation

The primary data for the study were collected through a questionnaire measuring the variables in the study. Here the instrument developed by Opatha (2015) was used for measuring the variable of locus of control and the instrument was based on an operational definition, i.e., the summated rating received on a 10-item, 5-point Likert scale. There are ten indicators or aspects. Below mentions the 10 indicators.

1. Hard working as a determinant of success
2. Dependency of destiny on self-doing
3. Essentiality of powerful people for achieving success
4. Controlling others by being right
5. Dependency of success of life on self-ability to manage it
6. Dependency of prosperity of life on luck
7. Impact of hard working and perspective on grades of qualifications
8. Role of luck and others in giving success on work life and personal life
9. Relationship between the God's help and doing good things
10. Linkage between own behavior and things that happen

With regards to the indicators, the beliefs of the respondents or views of the respondents were solicited, and the interpretation was done according to the following scale:

Points

10 – 18 High external locus of control, 19 – 26 External locus of control,
27 – 34 Indifferent, 35 – 42 Internal locus of control, 43 – 50 High internal locus of control

The instrument developed by Koopmans et al (2013) was used to measure the job performance in the workplace using 15 items with proposed three theoretical dimensions including task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour. Response to individual items was scaled according to a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The respondents were comfortable with the English language and as a result, the questionnaire was presented in English language.

Reliability and Validity of the Measurement

The goodness of a measure and quality of a quantitative research are ensured by the validity and reliability of the instruments. Therefore, the internal consistency was examined by using the Cronbach's Alpha test. The reliability coefficient of locus of control was 0.702 and that of job performance was 0.893. Since all values are greater than the standard value 0.7 the instruments can be considered as internally reliable. The content validity of the instruments was ensured by the conceptualization and operationalization of the variables performed on the appropriate literature.

Techniques of Data Analysis

A computer based statistical data analysis package was used to analyse the collected data from primary sources and it was the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data analysis included a univariate analysis, a bivariate analysis and a differential analysis based on the Independent Sample T Test.

Data Analysis

Results

Relevant to the univariate analysis, frequency distribution analysis was carried out based on the respondents by their demographic characteristics. (Table 1)

As shown in Table 2, the mean of the Locus of Control of executives under the study was 3.7810. It is almost 4 resulting in a finding that majority of executives in the selected apparel organization under the study are individuals with ILC. Due to the reason that the standard deviation is less than 1 (.41469), the dispersion is not much and most of the executives are centered around the mean. Table 3 provides frequencies.

As shown in Table 2, the mean value of the distribution of job performance of executive level employees in selected apparel organization is 4.1187. Considering this mean value, it can be said that the job performance is high among executive level employees as it is greater than value 4. The standard deviation which offers an index of the spread of a distribution or the variability in the data is 0.47137 which is less than 1 indicating that the dispersion is not much.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Demographic Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	94	56%
	Female	74	44%
Age	Between 20-29	70	42%
	Between 30-39	64	38%
	Between 40-49	32	19%
	Above -50	2	1%
Educational qualification	Diploma	15	9%
	First Degree	106	63%
	Master's Degree	40	19%
	PhD	6	4%
	Other	1	1%
Work experience	0-1 years	32	19%
	2-5 years	54	32%
	6-10 years	52	31%
	11-20 years	19	11%
	Above -21 years	11	7%
Designations category	Executive	64	38%
	Senior Executive	42	25%
	Assistant Manager	22	13%
	Manager	21	13%
	Above Manger	19	11%

Table 2. Statistics of the Distribution of Locus of Control and Job Performance

	Locus of Control	Job Performance
Mean	3.7810	4.1187
Standard Deviation	.41469	.47137
Minimum	2.60	2.80
Maximum	4.80	5
Range	2.20	2.20

Table 3. Frequencies of Locus of Control

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2.00	1	.6	.6	.6
	3.00	37	22.0	22.0	22.6
	4.00	110	65.5	65.5	88.1
	5.00	20	11.9	11.9	100.0
	Total	168	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 3, the first row is for the composite response of external locus of control (coded in the data with the value 2). The second row is for the composite response of indifferent (coded in the data with the value 3). Third row is for the composite response of internal locus of control (coded with the value 4) while fourth row is for the composite response of high internal locus of control (coded with the value 5).

110 Executives are having ILC and the percentage of such Managers is 65.5. 20 Executives are having high ILC and it is 11.9 as a percentage. "Being indifferent" type includes 37 Executives and only one Executive has ELC. Almost 77% of Executives have ILC. Thus, the majority of the Executives in the selected apparel organization under the study are having the Internal Locus of Control.

Furthermore, the main objective of this study was to investigate the effect of locus of control on Job performance. Therefore, the correlation analysis and the simple regression analysis were performed to determine the relationship (Table 4) and the effect of locus of control on job performance. (Table 5)

Table 4. Correlations between Locus of Control and Job Performance

		Locus of Control	Job performance
Locus of Control	Pearson Correlation	1	.604**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	168	168
Job performance	Pearson Correlation	.604**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	168	168

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Pearson correlation between the two variables of Executive level employees is 0.604, which is positive. This shows that there is a positive relationship between internal locus of control and job performance. This found relationship is statistically significant as

correlation is significant at 0.01 level (1-tailed). Thus, there is statistical evidence to claim that internal locus of control and job performance are positively and significantly related.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analysis

R Square	Adjusted R Square	β value	Sig value	N
.365	.361	.604	.000	168

According to the result shown in Table 5, the β value for the locus of control is 0.604. It indicates that there is a positive effect of internal locus of control on job performance. It can be further said, if internal locus of control increases by one unit, job performance will be increased by 0.604. It is significant since the p value is 0.000, it is less than 0.05. Hence it can be substantiated that there is a positive effect on internal locus of control on job performance of Executives in selected apparel organization, Sri Lanka.

Furthermore, an independent T-test analysis was conducted to investigate whether there is a significant difference between male and female Executive employees in the selected apparel organization with regard to degree of Locus of Control. (Table 6 & Table 7)

Table 6. Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Locus of Control	Male	94	3.8606	.36844	.03800
	Female	74	3.6797	.44935	.05224

According to the relevant descriptive statistics, i.e., the mean values, there is a difference between male executives and female executives with regard to the degree of LOC. It suggests that degree of LOC of male executives is greater than that of female executives. In order to find out whether this difference is statistically significant or not Independent Sample T Test was used.

Table 7. Independent Sample T- test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Locus of Control	3.888	.050	2.867	166	.005	.18091	.06310	.05633	.30549
			2.801	139.949	.006	.18091	.06460	.05320	.30862

Results of the Independent Sample T Test show that Levene's test for equality of variances is not significant with $F = 3.888$ (sig .05). It means that variability in the two conditions is significantly different. Therefore, T Test for equal variances are assumed was considered (Norusis, 1997, cited in Opatha and Perera, 2017). The T value for equal variances assumed is 2.801 and that was statistically significant at 95% confident level (sig = 0.006 that is less than 0.05). Since the t value is statistically significant, the relevant alternative hypothesis cannot be rejected. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Since group statics revealed that the mean (LOC) for the male was greater than the mean (LOC) for the female. Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between male and female executive employees with regard to degree of locus of control.

Findings, Discussion and Conclusion

It was found that the degree of locus of control within most of the executive level employees is internal (internal locus of control) as the mean value was 3.8869. This value is closer to 4. It is almost 4 resulting in a finding that majority of executives in the selected apparel organization under the study are individuals with ILC.

It was revealed that the degree of job performance of executives at the selected apparel organization was high as the mean value was 4.1187. This value is greater than 4. Therefore, it can be concluded that the executives at selected apparel organization were high level in terms of their job performance.

According to the results of Pearson's product moment correlation (Table 4 & 5), it was found that there is a positive relationship between locus of control and employee job performance of executives at the selected apparel organization in Sri Lanka and as per the group statics (Table 6) it revealed that the mean (LOC) for the male was greater than the mean (LOC) for the female. With the independent T-test analysis (Table 7), it can be concluded that there is a significant difference between male and female executive employees with regard to degree of locus of control.

Since it is confirmed that there is a significant effect of locus of control on job performance (positive relationship), in order to improve job performance, the relevant manager should possess an internal locus of control. Managers including junior ones called executives in Sri Lanka are critical personnel in a company. Managers are responsible for managing the human resources of the company as well (Welmilla, 2020), Hence it is suggested that the administration of organization should try its best to enhance and develop the internal locus of control by training people, coaching & mentoring to develop their personality traits, and conducting personality selection tests. Training and development are helping to train the employee to perform well in the organization while mentoring changes employee behavior and attitude in the workplace, positively change employee thinking towards the organization (Welmilla, 2020). Thus, the organization can survive and improve performance.

Further studies are needed to identify other personality traits that affect job performance of the executives in addition to the locus of control. This study did not involve considering moderating or mediating variables which modify or explain the relationship between locus of control and job performance. Therefore, future research directions will have the need

to further identify and clarify (a) the dimensionality and stability of internal and external locus of control and (b) how locus of control is operationalized, (c) the antecedents of locus of control, (d) additional work-related outcomes and (e) moderators for the effects of locus of control. It would be better, if the mixed methods approach is used to measure the phenomenon in further studies. A critical variable like employee engagement which refers to the extent to which an employee gets involved in the job and the organization cognitively, emotionally, and behaviourally (Iddagoda and Opatha, 2020) may play a mediating role on the relationship between locus of control and job performance. It is suggested to conduct an empirical study to investigate this probable mediator role of employee engagement. It is curious to know whether religiosity that refers to “the extent to which a particular employee believes in and venerates the founder, gods or goddesses of the relevant religion, practices the relevant teaching and participates in the relevant activities” (Iddagoda and Opatha, 2017) has an impact on locus of control and how it impacts.

The findings of this study have provided an insight into the existing theory of locus of control and job performance. Specifically, this study extends the literature of locus by examining the relationship of locus of control with job performance, the effect of locus of control on job performance, and gender difference. The results provide clear evidence that internal locus of control positively and significantly affects job performance of the executive employees and male executives possess high internal locus of control when compared with the female executives’ level of locus of control in a selected apparel organization. Hence, it is suggested that the internal locus of control needs to be enhanced within executives in order to increase job performance and female executives need to be encouraged to enhance further their internal locus of control.

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