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INTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL AS A PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR OF ACADEMIC MOTIVATION IN SCHOOL STUDENTS

Pardayeva Umida Mukhtor qizi,
Researcher, Nizami Tashkent State Pedagogical University

Academic motivation is a key component of students’ educational activity because it influences the direction, intensity, and persistence of learning behavior. Contemporary educational psychology views motivation as a complex psychological system involving needs, interests, goals, values, and personal meanings. In the educational context, academic motivation is reflected in students’ willingness to acquire knowledge, develop their abilities, overcome difficulties, and achieve meaningful educational goals.

Adolescence is a particularly important period for the development of academic motivation because students gradually become more independent in decision-making and increasingly responsible for their educational choices. Their interpretations of academic success and failure may influence their willingness to invest effort and persist in difficult tasks. Therefore, individual psychological characteristics that shape students’ perceptions of control over educational outcomes require particular attention.

One such characteristic is locus of control. The concept was introduced by J. Rotter within his social learning theory. Rotter distinguished between internal and external orientations according to how individuals perceive the relationship between their behavior and its consequences. Individuals with a predominantly internal locus of control tend to associate outcomes with their own actions, effort, and decisions, whereas individuals with an external locus of control are more likely to attribute outcomes to chance, circumstances, fate, or other people.

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between internal locus of control and academic motivation among secondary school students and to determine the psychological significance of perceived personal control in students’ educational activity.

Rotter’s theory provides the principal theoretical foundation for understanding locus of control. According to this approach, individuals develop generalized expectations concerning the relationship between their behavior and reinforcement. When reinforcement is perceived as dependent on personal actions, an internal orientation is expressed. When it is perceived as determined primarily by chance or external circumstances, an external orientation becomes more prominent.

In educational settings, internal locus of control may be reflected in students’ willingness to recognize the role of effort, persistence, and personal decisions in

achieving academic results. Students who perceive themselves as capable of influencing educational outcomes may be more likely to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning activities.

A. Bandura’s social-cognitive theory provides an additional explanation of this relationship. Self-efficacy beliefs influence students’ choices, effort, persistence, and self-regulation. Similarly, B. Weiner’s attributional approach emphasizes the importance of how individuals explain success and failure. When students attribute academic outcomes to controllable factors such as effort, they may be more likely to maintain motivation and continue working toward improvement.

Academic motivation includes different forms that vary in their degree of autonomy. Self-determination theory developed by E. Deci and R. Ryan emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as important conditions for self-determined motivation. Students who experience themselves as active agents in their behavior may demonstrate stronger autonomous forms of motivation.

Internal locus of control and intrinsic motivation are related but distinct constructs. Locus of control concerns the perceived source of control over outcomes, whereas intrinsic motivation refers to engaging in an activity because it is interesting or satisfying in itself. Their relationship is important because students who perceive their actions as influential may be more inclined to engage actively and independently in learning.

The empirical study involved 400 students from grades 8–9 and 10–11 in nine general secondary schools located in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent.

Academic motivation was assessed using the Academic Motivation Scale developed by R. Vallerand and colleagues. Motivational regulation was examined using the Academic Self-Regulation Questionnaire. Self-efficacy was assessed using the Schwarzer and Jerusalem Self-Efficacy Scale, while locus of control was measured using the questionnaire developed by S. Panteleyev and V. Stolin.

The data were statistically processed using SPSS 27. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was used to examine relationships among academic motivation, motivational regulation, self-efficacy, and locus of control. The Student’s t-test was also used in the broader experimental study. The present article focuses primarily on the correlational relationships between locus of control and academic motivation.

The findings demonstrated statistically significant relationships between locus of control and different forms of academic motivation. The strongest positive associations were identified between internal locus of control and intrinsic motivation related to self-development ($r = 0.736$, $p < .01$) and interest in learning and knowledge ($r = 0.701$, $p < .01$). Internal locus of control was also positively associated with identified motivation ($r = 0.648$, $p < .01$) and positive internal regulation associated with feelings of pride ($r = 0.512$, $p < .01$).

These findings indicate that students who perceive themselves as more responsible for their outcomes tend to demonstrate stronger autonomous and internally oriented

forms of academic motivation. They are more likely to study because of interest in knowledge, personal development, or the perceived value of learning.

At the same time, internal locus of control demonstrated negative relationships with externally regulated forms of motivation. External motivation was negatively associated with internal locus of control ($r = -0.492$, $p < .01$), while teacher-related motivation also demonstrated a negative relationship ($r = -0.396$, $p < .05$). Negative internal obligation associated with feelings of shame was also negatively related to internal locus of control ($r = -0.348$, $p < .05$).

The opposite pattern was observed for external locus of control. External locus of control was positively associated with external motivation ($r = 0.643$, $p < .01$), teacher-related motivation ($r = 0.538$, $p < .01$), and negative internal obligation associated with shame ($r = 0.457$, $p < .01$). Thus, internal and external control orientations were associated with different motivational patterns.

An additional finding concerned self-confidence. Internal locus of control demonstrated a strong positive relationship with self-confidence ($r = 0.709$, $p < .01$), whereas external locus of control was negatively related to self-confidence ($r = -0.638$, $p < .05$). Self-confidence was also positively associated with interest in learning ($r = 0.643$, $p < .01$), achievement motivation ($r = 0.618$, $p < .01$), and self-development motivation ($r = 0.681$, $p < .01$).

These findings suggest that internal locus of control does not function independently but forms part of a broader psychological system involving self-confidence, self-regulation, and academic motivation.

No statistically significant differences in internal and external locus of control were found among students from Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent. This suggests that, within the present sample, geographical differences were not associated with significant variation in locus of control.

It should be emphasized that the correlational design does not establish causal relationships. The findings demonstrate statistical associations between locus of control and academic motivation but do not prove that internal locus of control directly causes higher academic motivation.

The findings have several implications for educational psychology. First, internal locus of control may contribute to students’ sense of responsibility for learning outcomes. When students perceive their effort and actions as meaningful determinants of academic results, learning may become more autonomous and goal-oriented.

Second, internal locus of control was most strongly associated with motivation for self-development and interest in knowledge. This suggests that perceived personal agency may be particularly relevant to students’ willingness to engage in learning for personally meaningful reasons.

Third, the development of internal control should be connected with self-reflection, goal setting, self-regulation, and confidence in one’s abilities rather than reduced to simply encouraging students to “take responsibility.”

The theoretical perspectives of Rotter, Bandura, Deci and Ryan, and Weiner complement one another in explaining the relationship between perceived personal control and academic motivation. Together, these approaches suggest that students’ beliefs about their ability to influence outcomes may be associated with their willingness to regulate learning, persist in difficult situations, and engage in academically meaningful activities.

The broader experimental component of the research also included a psychological training program aimed at strengthening internal locus of control, self-confidence, and academic motivation. The program incorporated reflective exercises, goal setting, self-awareness activities, responsibility development, and group psychological activities. The reported post-training results indicated positive changes in internal locus of control, self-confidence, and several forms of academic motivation.

However, these intervention findings should be interpreted cautiously unless supported by an appropriate control group, validated measures, and statistical tests of between-group change.

The study demonstrates that internal locus of control is significantly associated with academic motivation among secondary school students. The strongest positive relationships were identified between internal locus of control and motivation for self-development ($r = 0.736$, $p < .01$) and interest in learning and knowledge ($r = 0.701$, $p < .01$). Internal locus of control was also positively associated with identified motivation, positive internal regulation, and self-confidence.

In contrast, external locus of control was more closely associated with externally regulated motivation and teacher-dependent motivational patterns. These findings suggest that perceived personal control may be an important psychological characteristic connected with students’ autonomous, active, and responsible attitudes toward learning.

At the same time, the results should be interpreted as correlational evidence rather than proof of direct causal effects. Further longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to clarify the mechanisms through which locus of control, self-efficacy, self-regulation, and academic motivation influence one another.

The findings highlight the importance of incorporating goal setting, reflection, self-regulation, responsibility development, and self-efficacy enhancement into psychological and educational programs aimed at strengthening students’ academic motivation.

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