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ACADEMIC LOCUS OF CONTROL AND DECISION-MAKING STYLES: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The goal of the research was to identify how Academic Locus of Control and decision making styles relate to each other in university students while also taking into account the relationship of gender with these variables. The study used a correlational design to investigate the proposed hypotheses. A collected sample of 200 university students of ages between 18 and 25 years. The sample was gathered using convenient sampling techniques from universities, given that the participant was enrolled in a programme at the university. The tools used in this research were the Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) Scale (Rev.) (Curtis & Trice, 2013) to quantify the Academic Locus of Control of the sample. To assess and measure the decision making styles of the sample, the Decision Style Questionnaire (Leykin & DeRubeis, 2010) was used. The results showed that brooding decision making style strongly correlated with external locus of control. No significant difference was found in the Academic Locus of Control score between the two genders in the sample, males and females, however, males were found to be more confident decision makers, and females were found to be more dependent decision makers.

Keywords: *Academic Locus of Control, decision making styles, Brooding*

Introduction

With the world quickly evolving in the new technology, the decision styles of individuals have emerged as a major challenge in creating the extent to which individuals in different areas of life can adapt and perform in life. Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) means that a person believes in their capabilities of controlling their academics. The described concept is founded on an assumption that people with an internal locus of control assume that they are the primary contributors to their academic success through their own actions (Sami & ABBAS, 2024). Conversely, individuals who have an external locus of control explain their performance in terms of external factors, be it luckiness or other people. The idea was further elaborated by Walker and Jiang (2022) who also introduced internal Academic Locus of Control to views on incremental beliefs (traits which are subject to change) and external Academic Locus of Control to views on entity beliefs (traits which are fixed).

Simultaneously, decision-making can be defined as the process of choice or a selection among the alternatives, and decision-making styles can be described as patterns or strategies, which people use to make decisions. The way the individuals perceive and process information about their options and themselves was important in the decision-making process (Lv et al., 2022). Although there is vast literature on Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles, little literature has been

conducted to establish the relationship between the two variables. The proposed study aims to fill this gap by examining how academic locus of control of a person qualifies to have an impact on his/her decision-making styles in academic and other life situations. It is theorized that how an individual believes that they can have a control over their academic performance may also be an indication of their ability to make decisions in different areas.

Academic Locus of Control: Locus of control is the perceptions that the people have regarding their ability to control what happens in their lives. Academic Locus of Control is used in an academic setting to determine the degree to which students are convinced that they depend on either internal (effort, ability) or external (luck, other actions of people) factors to achieve academic success or failure. Academic locus of control follows the same argument in that students believe in the extent to which they can affect their academic performance by their actions (Chukwuma Rita Nneka et al., 2025).

Decision Making Styles: The decision-making styles are determined by how people think and make decisions. It involves whether one is left to his/her judgment or he is subject to some external forces. Decision styles may be avoidant whereby the person procrastinates and avoids making decisions, or confident in which he/she makes decisions confidently. Anxious, vigilant, spontaneous, intuitive, and brooding are also other styles that are looked upon in this research.

Literature Review

The connection between Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) and decision-making styles has never been comprehensively studied in the past literature, even though the variables were researched over a long period of time. This loophole is significant because it creates prospects of learning how the perception of control affects the decisions made by the individual. There are several studies that have investigated the independent influences of Academic Locus of Control with special reference to its significance in academic and personal growth.

Locus of control was also explained as a precursor to other behavioral and performance outcomes, including job attitudes and overall motivation (Tedone et al., 2025). Their study highlighted the fact that locus of control cannot be merely associated with self-affirmation but other decisions in life are greatly influenced by it. This understanding is crucial in broadening out the context of application of Academic Locus of Control especially on the issue of decision-making. The meta-analysis conducted by Haidari, Kocoglu, and Kanadli (2023) included studies that examined the connection between self-efficacy, Academic Locus of Control, achievement and motivation. Their findings showed that there was a significant relationship between Academic Locus of Control and motivation, but not achievement, which implies that motivation determines the way people feel they have control over the results of their work. This observation is fundamental in the realms of how locus of control of a person may influence his/her decision-making approach especially in the academic context. Locus of control might be a predictor of academic performance, which internal Academic Locus of Control is associated with better academic performance. This finding is in agreement with the speculation that the internal locus of control has the potential to influence the superior decision-making abilities because they feel personal responsibility to change instead of merely being victims of circumstances.

The impact of Academic Locus of Control on academic success and dropout among students, the external locus of control is associated with bad academic performance and high rates of dropout (Hodge & Jones, 2023). This strengthens the opinion that the attitude that they cannot control academic performance may hinder making effective choices that may have negative academic implications.

Although most of the literature discussed the effect of locus of control on academic performance, another study by Ebenezer Bamfo Aidoo and Ronald Osei Mensah (2024) expanded on this knowledge by empirically testing the effect of Academic Locus of Control on decision-making and self-efficacy. They established the fact that students who have internal locus of control have a greater academic success and make more confident rational decisions. Researchers have discovered that

a positive correlation was observed between internal Academic Locus of Control and high GPAs, whereas external Academic Locus of Control was negatively associated with poor academic outcomes (Nnamdi Obikeze & Ifediorah, Comfort Chinenye, 2025).

The relationship between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making also have been seen in a study that states that high internal Academic Locus of Control students considered themselves as more efficient academically (Micomonaco & Espinoza, 2019). This perception may affect decision-making strategies making decisions more deliberate and assured. Ariff et al. (2022) discovered that motivation is positively associated with self-efficacy, which tends to be affected by Academic Locus of Control, and subsequently influences the decision-making styles. This would mean that students who have high sense of self-efficacy which is usually associated with internal Academic Locus of Control tend to be more prone to portray confident decision-making styles.

There are also some studies that were conducted on gender difference in Academic Locus of Control. Cooper et al. (1981) established that females tend to have more internal locus of control than males do. This result is important in the study of how gender can have an impact on decision making behaviour since it indicates that people who have internal locus of control tend to be more responsible about their choice of decisions. This observation is especially applicable in the context of the educational environment, where internal Academic Locus of Control can enable students to make decisions that are more proactive in terms of their academic and personal life.

The theoretical framework that was used to construct this research is founded on the pioneering writing of Rotter (1966) who initially developed the concept of locus of control as a personality trait that defines the ways individuals view control over the situations in their lives (Bibi et al., 2023). The development of this theory that divides perceived control, agentic engagement, and contextual influences offers a more detailed explanation of the impact of internal and external locus of control on academic behaviors of people. Moreover, self-efficacy theory has also been combined with locus of control, and it has outlined the way in which the belief of individuals in their abilities affects their motivation and academic success (Bhati & Sethy, 2022). These theories underpin the study which will explore the effect of Academic Locus of Control on the decision making styles and academic behaviors.

Improving learning outcomes through self-efficacy and Academic Locus of Control in the learning process, students that possess a high self-efficacy level and inner locus of control are better in their adaptive learning behaviour, which has led to their increased academic performance (Flahive, 2024). Such interrelationship between Academic Locus of Control and self-efficacy plays an important role in the interpretation of the role played by internal Academic Locus of Control in decision-making and academic performance improvement. Locus of control can be used to predict the results in a wide range of spheres, such as decision-making, and thus its usability is not limited to the academic sphere.

Rationale

Although much research has been done alone on Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles, little has been done to determine the relationship between the two. The development of a good, empirically-grounded relationship between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making may be a significant contribution to the way academic control beliefs influence the decision-making in a real-life situation. Higher insight into this connection would enable educational practitioners to orientate the students to attaining more healthy decision-making habits, which eventually would result in improvement of their studies and lives. This paper seeks to draw attention to the connection between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles, external and internal locus of control may impact the capability to make decisions in students, and the outcome of this relationship on their academic performance and their psychological health.

The overall research question that will direct this study is the acknowledgment of whether Academic Locus of Control is linked to decision-making styles. Particularly, the research aims at appreciating how the perception that one has the ability to control his or her academic performance affects the

decision-making process of the individual in different life situations. This research will fill the gap in the literature to study the relationship on Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles. Through the investigation of effects of Academic Locus of Control on decision-making in academic and other life situations, this study aims at giving information on how the belief of students in their academic control impacts on their decision-making behaviors. The results of the present research might be relevant to the educational practice, as they can assist teachers to comprehend how locus of control influences the choice of students and their academic achievement.

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses of this study are as follows:

- H1: Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles have a significant relationship.
- H2: Academic Locus of Control and the decision-making styles differ in gender.
- H3: Individuals with external and internal locus of control have differences in their decision-making styles.

Methodology

Research Design

The research design used in this study was the correlational research design to determine the relationship that exists between Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) and decision-making styles among university students. A correlational design was considered as the most suitable one because it will enable the investigation of the direction and the strength of the relationship between these two variables but not manipulate them. Since the research involves the analysis of gender variations and other demographic variables, the correlational design is suitable in the context of quantifying these associations and preserving the naturalistic validity of the sample.

Sample

Table 1

Socio Demographic Characteristics of Participants at Baseline (N=200)

Baseline Characteristics	N=200	
	n	%
Age		
18	16	8
19	23	11.5
20	18	9
21	32	16
22	41	20.5
23	40	20
24	15	7.5

25	15	7.5
Gender		
Male	60	30
Female	140	70
Family Systems		
Joint	47	23.5
Nuclear	153	76.5

The objective of the study was to determine the characteristics of students at the universities who were aged between 18 to 25 years. The selection of 200 participants was due to the power analysis done using G*Power with the level of significance of 0.05. Data collection was conducted at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University), participants were recruited in a convenience basis which is based on the fact that they were chosen because they were available at the time of data collection. The inclusion criteria were that they had to be students of a full-time degree course. Nevertheless, graduates were not considered in the study. The demographic data were gathered with the help of a special form, which contained such questions as age, sex, and family organization type. The following were the characteristics of the participants: 16% were 18 years old, 23% were 20 years old, 32% were 21 years old, 41% were 22 years old, 40% were 23 years old and 7.5% were between 24 and 25 years old. About gender, 30 were males (n=60) and the remaining 70 were females (n=140). About the family structure, 23.5% were in joint families (n=47) and 76.5% in nuclear families (n=153). The convenience sampling technique was applied because of the accessibility to the participants and time limitations. Every respondent made an informed consent to participate in the study.

Measures

The variables of this study were measured using two major measures:

Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) Scale (Rev.) (Curtis, 2013):

The Academic Locus of Control Scale is comprised of 21 items and it measures the extent to which one feels his or her performance in school is dependent on internal and external factors. The answers to every item are indicated to be true (T) or false (F). Higher than 12 represents an external locus of control whereas below 12 depicts an internal locus of control. This scale has also proved to be very reliable with a test-retest reliability of 0.92 and internal consistency of 0.70 (Morelli et al., 2023b).

Decision Style Questionnaire (Leykin and DeRubeis, 2010):

Decision Style Questionnaire is a 43-item questionnaire that is used to measure decision-making styles in various categories. The items are measured on a five-point Likert scale with the responses of 1 (Never) to 5 (Always). This scale has exhibited good internal consistency ranging between 0.68 and 0.93 as the values of the alpha coefficients ((Ponmozhi & Achya, 2024).

Procedure

The data was collected on the university premises, and the participants were requested to fill in the Academic Locus of Control Scale and the Decision

Style Questionnaire. Before the process, they all had to sign a consent sheet that contained their voluntary participation in the study and their awareness of the procedures. The anonymity of their answers was highlighted by the consent form, as well as their right to withdraw without repercussions, at all times.

A demographics form was given to the participants who were requested to complete it prior to filling the scales. The whole duration required was around 20 to 30 minutes a participant. The questionnaires were given face-to-face so that clarity of directions is ensured as well as to help in case of inquiries.

Statistical Analysis

Some statistical tests and procedures were used in analyzing the data. Descriptive statistics were used to measure the demographic data and scores of the respondents on Academic Locus of Control Scale and Decision Style Questionnaire. The correlation between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles was analyzed through Pearson correlation. Independent samples t-test were used to compare the gender differences in Academic Locus of Control and style of decision making and Cohen d was computed to find the magnitude of the gender differences in decision making styles.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical guidelines used in this study were the informed consent of all the subjects, the privacy of the data taken and right of privacy. The participants were also assured that their answers would remain anonymous and would only be utilized in the objectives of this study. The Ethical Review Board of Forman Christian College gave Ethical approval to this research.

Analysis and Discussion

Results

The findings of this research are aimed at examining the correlation between Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) and decision-making styles among university students. The gender difference in both variables is also analyzed as well as the effect of internal and external Academic Locus of Control in the decision-making styles. Analysis of the data was done by descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and t-test of independence.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, Skewness, Kurtosis of Decisions Styles Questionnaire and Academic Locus of Control Scale (N=200)

Scale	M(SD)	Skewness	Kurtosis
Decision Styles Questionnaire	102.4(13.2)	-.79	.233
Academic Locus of Control Scale	13.2(2.5)	.169	.248

Table 2 demonstrates means and standard deviation of Decision Style Questionnaire (DSQ) and Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) Scale. The means of the DSQ was 102.4 (SD = 13.2), whereas of the Academic Locus of Control Scale, 13.2 (SD = 2.5). These two datasets showed normal distribution on the basis of skewness and kurtosis.

Table 3

Correlation between decision making styles and Academic Locus of Control(N=200)

Variable	n	M	SD	Correlation coefficient(*r*)	Significance Value(*p*)
Spontaneous Decision Style	200	8.42	(3.24)	.141	.047
Vigilant Decision Style	200	16.45	(3.93)	.109	.125
Avoidant Decision Style	200	10.23	(3.94)	.050	.481

Confident Decision Style	200	12.45	(4.33)	.020	.775
Respected Decision Style	200	4.81	(1.74)	-.014	.839
Dependent Decision Style	200	15.05	(4.36)	.126	.074
Anxious Decision Style	200	11.41	(4.20)	.126	.074
Intuitive Decision Style	200	12.40	(3.35)	.122	.085
Brooding Decision Style	200	11.18	(3.43)	.230	.001

Pearson correlation showed that there was a moderate positive relationship between the brooding decision style and Academic Locus of Control (r =.230, p=.001). There was a low positive relationship between Academic Locus of Control and spontaneous decision style (r = .141, p =.047). There were no key relationships between Academic Locus of Control and other decision-making styles.

Table 4

Mean comparison of Gender, decision making styles and Academic Locus of Control (N=200)

	Male		Female				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	Sig. 2 tailed (p)	Cohen's d
Spontaneous Decision Style	8.55	3.13	3.29	.279	.371	.711	0.026
Vigilant Decision Style	17.07	3.90	16.18	3.93	1.47	.144	0.104
Avoidant Decision Style	10.12	3.45	10.28	4.14	-.266	.791	0.019
Confident Decision Style	13.4	4.42	12.04	4.25	2.057	.041	0.145
Respected Decision Style	5.083	1.68	4.69	1.76	1.47	.147	0.103
Dependent Decision Style	14.00	4.64	15.50	4.17	-2.25	.025	0.159
Anxious Decision Style	10.82	4.13	11.66	4.22	-1.311	.191	0.093
Intuitive Decision Style	12.10	3.43	12.53	3.32	-.829	.408	0.059
Brooding Decision Style	10.25	3.37	11.57	3.39	-2.53	.012	0.179
Total Academic Locus of Control Scores	13.13	2.626	13.18	2.45	-1.35	.892	0.010

No difference between Academic Locus of Control scores (t = -1.35, p = .892) was found between genders using independent samples t-test. Nevertheless, there were male and female differences in the decision-making styles. The Confident Decision Style was found to be more prevalent in males (t = 2.057, p = .041, Cohen's d = 0.145), whereas the Dependent and the Brooding Decision Modes were more common in females (t = -2.25, p =.025, Cohen's d=0.159 and t = -2.53, p =.012, Cohen's d= 0.179).

Table 5

Group differences between decision making styles and external/internal locus of control.

	Internal LoC		External LoC				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	Sig. 2 tailed (p)	Cohen's d
Spontaneous Decision Style	7.88	3.20	8.5	3.25	-.903	.368	0.064
Vigilant Decision Style	15.38	3.13	16.60	4.02	-1.48	.141	0.104
Avoidant Decision Style	9.42	4.49	10.35	3.85	-1.12	.264	0.079
Confident Decision Style	12.42	5.07	12.45	4.23	-.028	.978	0.002
Respected Decision Style	4.69	1.72	4.83	1.75	-.37	.713	0.026
Dependent Decision Style	14.15	4.21	15.18	4.38	-1.125	.262	0.080
Anxious Decision Style	10.58	4.13	11.53	4.21	-1.085	.279	0.077
Intuitive Decision Style	12.31	3.37	12.41	3.36	-.150	.881	0.011
Brooding Decision Style	9.81	3.69	11.38	3.35	-2.19	.029	0.156

The third hypothesis established that there was a significant difference in brooding decision style (t = -2.19, p =.029, Cohens d = 0.156), with external Academic Locus of Control participants brooding more (M= 11.38) than internal Academic Locus of Control participants brooding less (M= 9.81). Other decision-making styles did not find a difference.

Discussion

The connection between Academic Locus of Control (ALOC) and decision-making styles is a least studied matter especially in regard to the Pakistani university students. This was the gap that was aimed to be filled with the present study through the analysis of how the perception of students towards their ability to control their achievement affects their decision-making styles. The study was also intended to determine the gender disparities on such variables, which would be new in the field.

The two key variables were measured with the help of Academic Locus of Control Scale (Morelli et al., 2023) and Decision Style Questionnaire (Leykin and DeRubeis, 2010). These validated tools permitted one to collect data in a reliable fashion and gave a good basis upon which to study the relationship between Locus of Control and decision-making.

According to the first hypothesis, there was an expected relationship between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles. These findings confirmed this hypothesis where the regression analysis revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between external locus of control and brooding decision-making style. This result shows that people who have external locus of control are more likely to consider and doubt their choices than an internal locus of control. An less significant yet significant relationship was observed between spontaneous decision-making style and external locus of control, which implies that external locus of control may also result in people adopting a more impulsive decision-making style. Other decision-making styles (e.g. confident, dependent,

anxious) showed no significant relationships with locus of control.

The second hypothesis was that there were differences in gender in Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles. Gender differing significantly in Academic Locus of Control scores showed no significant differences meaning that male and female participants all have a similar perception with regards to how they can control their academic outcome. These differences were however, tremendous when it came to decision-making styles. Male respondents were more assured in their decision making and females showed more dependent and brooding decision making. These findings indicate that gender roles in society potentially affect decision making processes whereby the male gender is socialized to be more aggressive and the female more cautious and contemplative.

The third hypothesis was a comparison of decision-making styles in individuals having internal and external locus of control. The findings also indicated that, as compared to those with a personal locus of control, those with an external locus of control tended to use brooding decision-making; this was corroborating the previous results. The results have educational implications on interventions. Teachers can foster a more internal locus of control among the students to help build up their confidence in making decisions and minimize overthinking. Also, gender-sensitive training can be encouraged to resolve the gender gap between males and females in the area of decision-making and guarantee that both genders have equal chance in academic activities.

Limitations

The research was carried out on a sample population of 200 young adults of Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) which might not be entirely representative of the general population. The sample size or data of other Pakistani universities were not used because of time constraints in the academic semester and insufficient funds. The study specifically targeted students of universities of the age between 18 and 25; therefore, the results could not be generalized to other age groups, including adolescents or elderly. Also, the research was done on the Pakistani culture and therefore the findings might not be generalized to other cultures of the students. The limitation of this study should be overcome by incorporation of cross-cultural comparisons in future research.

There was also an unequal distribution of gender, 140 were females and 60 were males, and there was significant disbalance in the Academic Locus of Control scores (26 internal vs. 174 external). It will assist in overcoming this problem through a more balanced sample in future research. Finally, the Academic Locus of Control Scale and Decision Style Questionnaire were self-reported, which means that the data were prone to the social desirability bias that could compromise the inner validity of the research.

Implications

The results of the study indicate that the confidence in decision-making and decrease in overthinking in students might be improved through the development of the internal locus of control. It is also suggested to use gender-sensitive interventions to overcome gender-based decision-making differences. The future studies should focus on cross-cultural comparisons, and desire to have more balanced samples to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed the correlation between Academic Locus of Control and decision-making styles among university students with more emphasis on gender variation and their consequences. The results indicate that external locus of control is closely related to a brooding decision-making style, which gives an indication that students with less control over their academic performances are over-thinkers. External locus of control was also weakly related with spontaneous decision-making. But there were no notable correlations between locus of control and other decision-making styles.

There were some differences between the genders with the males being more confident in making decisions and the females having a high degree of dependence and brooding. This is an indicator of

the expectations and gender roles in the society that influences the decision-making styles.

The findings of the study indicate the possibility of promoting the internal locus of control among the students to increase their confidence in the decision-making process and decrease overthinking. There is also need to introduce gender-sensitive interventions that will encourage autonomy and independence in decision-making, especially in females.

To overcome the constraints of this research study, future studies may involve a more diverse sample and cross-cultural comparisons done to further examine locus of control and decision-making styles in various situations.

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