



Locus of Control and Adolescents' Aggression

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Having control of one's life can decrease aggressive and violent behaviours. To achieve this, people must have control over their personal environment. Some people feel that they either have control over any situation in their lives while some other thinks that things happen due to their luck or chance. Locus of control is a construct that measures the degree to which individuals believe they are responsible for the consequences of their behaviour. Aggression is a forceful action or procedure specially when intended to dominate or master. This study attempted to see how locus of control is correlated with aggression. The study was conducted in Sonitpur district of Assam. The sample for the study was 32 numbers of respondents identified and selected purposively from a population of 185 students belonging to IXth (Ninth) standard of selected schools. A standardized questionnaire namely Direct & Indirect Aggression Scales developed by Bjorkqvist and Niemela [4] was used to gather data to find out the prevalence of aggression among adolescents. For assessment of Locus of Control, Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale developed by Nowicki and Strickland [5] was used. The findings of the study revealed that three types of aggression viz. physical verbal and social were present among the respondents which were categorized as high, average and low. Results also revealed that majority of the respondents (93.75%) had external locus of control whereas only 6.25 per cent of the respondents had intermediate locus of control and

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no respondents were recorded to have internal locus of control. The results revealed positive correlation between external locus of control and adolescents' aggression which is significant at 5% probability level ($r=.362$, $p=.042$).

Keywords: Aggression; adolescents; locus of control; correlation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Almost every person feels that they either have control or not over the situations in their lives. Some people feel that they either have control over any situation in their lives while some other thinks that things happen due to their luck or chance. They do not try to change or modify their behaviour and situation as they perceive that these are not under their control. They are stress driven. The reasons for their stress may be numerous and related to their day to day living situations resulting which they might have conflict with parents, siblings, peers, friends, other family members, neighbours or even with strangers. The growing capabilities of young people are simply the raw material of human development. But the growing capability does not guarantee that healthy development would take place, because adolescents' emotional landscape changes quickly. "Their general health appears to be strongly associated with their cognitive, motivational variable such as locus of control. It is essential for maintaining a healthy life environment. Having control of one's life can decrease aggressive and violent behaviours. To achieve this, people must have control over their personal environment. Locus of control is a personality concept originally proposed" by Rotter [1]. "According to this concept, people can be categorized into two types: internal control and external control. People with an internal locus of control believe that the environment is responsive to their own relatively permanent characteristics and that rewards are contingent on personal actions, whereas for those with an external locus of control the environment and external rewards are seen as uncontrollable. It is the ability to apply control over outcomes which can influence the extent to which frustration results in aggression. Aggressive behaviour can be conceptualized as the observable manifestation of aggression, which is defined as any act intended to cause harm, pain, or injury in another" [2]. "Locus of control is vital for maintaining a healthy life environment. Having control of one's life can decrease aggressive and violent behaviours. To achieve this, people must have control over their personal environment". According to Osterman et al. [3], "internal locus

of control is composed of dependent events mostly related to one's permanent characteristics. Internal locus of control reflects the belief that one has personal control over the events that occur. On the other hand, external locus of control is related to the feeling that outcomes are a result of fate, luck, chance, or in control of others. According to them, external locus of control is correlated with negative attributes such as conduct disorder, psychological maladjustment, job pressure, depression and anxiety, suicidal behaviours".

Hence, the present study was undertaken with the following objectives.

- To explore the locus of control related to adolescents' aggression.
- To find out the correlation between external locus of control and aggression of adolescents.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two schools of Sonitpur district of Assam. The sample size of the study was 32 numbers of respondents identified and selected from 185 numbers of students of class IX (14-16 years) showing aggressive behaviour. Sociometry was used in this study to identify the sample showing significant aggressive behaviour with the help of a maximum/high frequency of negative nominations. The demographic characteristics were collected by a self structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. In order to assess the types and levels of aggression of selected respondents data were gathered from self, peers and teachers with the help of a standardized structured questionnaire namely Direct & Indirect Aggression Scales (DIAS) developed by Bjorkqvist and Niemela [4] was used. For assessment of Locus of Control, Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale developed by Nowicki and Strickland [5] was used. The N-SLOC Scale was administered to the students in a group setting. The scale has 40 questions and the respondents were asked to give their responses for each statement. Each answer carries "1" and "0" for right and wrong answers

respectively. The score of the N-SLOC was calculated by adding up the number of “correct” answers. Higher scores reflected a more external locus of control means a high score on the Scale which indicates externality.

Descriptive Statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to measure demographic information, adolescents’ aggression and locus of control of the respondents. Correlation was used to investigate the relationship between locus of control and adolescent aggression.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study the researcher had made an attempt to identify the types and levels of adolescents’ aggression and to find out the relation between aggression and locus of control. Three types of aggression viz. physical, verbal and social aggression were found to be prevalent among the adolescents of class IX. An insight from the Table 1, it can be inferred that higher percentage of respondents showed high and average level of verbal aggression as reported by self, peers and teachers. Higher percentage of respondents showed average level of social aggression as

reported by self, peers and teachers. In case of physical aggression higher percentage of respondents showed high and average level as reported by self and peers.

3.1 Locus of Control Related to Adolescent Aggression

The scores of the locus of control of the respondents are presented in Table 2. The scores had been categorized in to three types i.e. ‘External’, ‘Intermediate’ and ‘Internal’.

Locus of control is a consistent personality trait, from an interindividual point of view, but levels of internal control increase by age, at least during adolescence and early adulthood [5,6,7,8,9].

The results revealed that majority of the respondents (93.75%) had external locus of control whereas only 6.25 per cent of the respondents had intermediate locus of control. Interestingly, no respondents were recorded to have internal locus of control. Results showed that adolescents with external locus of control did not find any relation between their behaviour and outcome.

Table 1. Prevalence of aggression according to self, peer and teacher

Types of aggression	Number of respondents (N=32)					
	Levels of aggression as reported by self, peer and teacher					
	Self		Peer		Teacher	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
Physical aggression						
High	10	31.25	12	37.50	7	21.88
Average	20	62.50	10	31.25	23	71.88
Low	2	6.25	10	31.25	2	6.25
Verbal aggression						
High	14	43.75	15	46.88	12	37.50
Average	15	46.88	17	53.13	18	56.25
Low	3	9.38	0	0.00	2	6.25
Social aggression						
High	5	15.63	2	6.25	6	18.75
Average	27	84.38	27	84.38	24	75.00
Low	0	0.00	3	9.38	2	6.25

Table 2. Locus of control related to adolescents’ aggression

Locus of control	Number of respondents				Total (N=32)	
	Male (N=18)		Female (F=14)		F	P
	F	P	F	P		
External	17	94.44	13	92.86	30	93.75
Intermediate	1	5.56	1	7.14	2	6.25
Internal	0	0	0	0	0	0

N = Total number of respondents

F = Frequency

P = Percentage

The respondents did not consider their success and failure as an outcome of their activities. Instead, they tend to believe that success and failure are primarily a matter of luck and chance. It can be attributed to the fact that the respondents of the present study were the adolescents showing comparatively more aggression than that of their contemporaries resulting in having external locus of control. This can be supported by many research findings [10,11,12] who had also found that external locus of control i.e. low control beliefs are consistently related to internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety. Radliff et al. [13] also found that students who admitted physical, verbal, and relational bullying tended to score higher on an external locus of control than students who denied bullying perpetration. The findings of Halloran et al. [14] is also in agreement of the results of the present study where they concluded that individuals with an external locus of control are characterized as yielding to external pressures like influence of others, societal or group-level norms allocating responsibility for their outcomes to others, and disregarding personal values in order to oppose social rejection. They experience more stress, anxiety, negativism, emotional instability, anger, depression and frustration which lead to uncontrolled direct and indirect aggressive behaviour. The causes of these problem behaviours may be rooted in their environmental and personal characteristics which aggravated in school or home situation during adolescence age.

Table 3 presents the correlation coefficient of external locus of control and aggression of adolescents. The results revealed positive correlation between external locus of control and adolescents' aggression which is significant at 5% probability level ($r=.362$, $p=.042$). This implies that if external locus of control increases, aggression also increases. External locus of control is associated with negative outcomes and correlated with emotional instability, anxiety and neuroticism. These respondents believed that success or failure is a result of luck, chance, fate or powerful others which means that they did not have control over their success or failure. They exhibited more anger and perceived others to be less friendly. They did not try hard to achieve something and tend to be negative. With increase of these behaviours, they experienced more stress and anxiety which lead to increase in aggression level. Moreover, they did not try to change or modify their behaviour

and situation as they perceived that these are not under their control which increases their stress level. The increased stress level influenced their day to day living situations resulting which they might have conflict with parents, siblings, peers, friends, other family members, teachers, neighbours and even with strangers or vice-versa. The reason behind this may be due to the fact that having control of one's life can decrease aggressive and violent behaviors for which people must have control over their personal environment.

The respondents with external locus of control had no control over the environment. They were unable to take stress and manifest aggressive behaviour and tried to defend their behaviour. It can be traced to the factors like family, community, school, parenting, peer group etc. As majority of the respondents belonged to average and low socio economic status, some observable multidimensional influencing factors were family violence, lack of safe and secure physical home environment due to large family size with more number of children, low profile occupation of parents, lack of education of parents and family members, ineffective parenting style, family crisis and conflict, academic disturbances, peer influence which are essential for maintaining a healthy life environment. Besides these few factors which contribute to aggression may be genetic and temperamental influences which in turn, shaped by this immediate environment. As a result they internalize negative attributes and try to defend their behaviour through aggression which establishes a positive correlation with external locus of control. This can be supported by the study of Osterman et al. [3], who found that "external locus of control is correlated with negative attributes such as conduct disorder, psychological maladjustment, job pressure, depression, anxiety and suicidal behaviours. Many other researchers also found a relationship between external locus of control and aggressive behavior" [3,15,16,17,18]. Hall [16] found that, "the relationship between external locus of control and aggression may exist because individuals with external locus of control perceive events as less predictable and aggress in order to exert influence over outcomes". In contrary to this Hall [16], also suggested "an inverse relationship between aggression and the perception of control over one's own life may exist. However, this study found only a relationship between physical aggression and external locus of control; the relationship was not found for verbal aggression".

Table 3. Correlation between external locus of control and aggression of adolescents

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	P value	Correlations
External locus of control	19.53	3.83	0.042	.362*
Aggression	36.19	4.53		

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

“Internal locus of control reflects the belief that one has personal control over the events that occur. Having control of one’s life can decrease aggressive and violent behaviours. As there was no respondent having internal locus of control under the study, correlation between these attributes was not done. It can also be well established by the fact that the study considered only the sample who exhibited aggressive behaviour more frequently than the others which proved to have external locus of control. Internal locus of control has been shown to be a positive and healthy aspect of one’s personality” [19,20] and is negatively associated with maladaptive behaviour like aggression. According to Osterman et al. [3], “internal locus of control is composed of dependent events mostly related to one’s permanent characteristics. Individuals with an internal locus of control can manage stressful situations effectively by using problem-solving strategies” [21,22,23].

4. CONCLUSION

The results of the study revealed that three types of aggression viz. physical verbal and social were present among the respondents which were categorized as high, average and low. Results also revealed that majority of the respondents (93.75%) had external locus of control whereas only 6.25 per cent of the respondents had intermediate locus of control and no respondents were recorded to have internal locus of control. The results revealed positive correlation between external locus of control and adolescents’ aggression which showed that both the objectives were fulfilled. Individuals with an internal orientation feel a sense of control over their lives, which contributes to enhance one’s academic success and social behavior. On the contrary, individuals with an external orientation feel a lack of control over their lives and often acquire feelings of helplessness and powerlessness. These emotions may hinder effort, thus, effecting academic achievement, as well as, arousing anger in social settings. Therefore, it is of utmost important to manage the unhealthy emotions to lead a happy life.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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