

## Investigating the relationship between profile factors and locus of control of selected college students in Camarines Norte, Philippines

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### Abstract

Numerous studies have revealed that locus of control is among the significant factors that contributed to the mental health challenges faced by individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the theory on locus of control, it is the degree to which a person feels he has control over events of his life, which can be internal or external. Filipinos have been known to adhere to a fatalistic attitude, which can be construed as a form of external locus of control. This study sought to discover the proportion of those who possess internal or external locus of control and the profile factors that could influence this. 226 college students from various public and private colleges in Camarines Norte, Philippines volunteered to take part in this study. The Locus of Control instrument based on Rotter was used to assess the locus of control of the respondents. When grouped according to sex, parental status and romantic status, majority of the respondents possess internal locus of control. However, percentage-wise, there are more males who have internal locus of control than females, there are more respondents without romantic involvement who possess internal locus of control than those with romantic involvement and those with only one surviving parent possess the most internal locus of control followed by those with parents who are living together and lastly by those whose parents are separated. Overall, 137 respondents or 60.62% possess internal locus of control and 89 or 39.38% have external locus of control. Chi square computations between locus of control and sex, parental status and romantic status yielded no significant relationships between these variables.

**Keywords:** Locus of Control; COVID-19; Camarines Norte; College students

### 1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic seemingly robbed the global population of a sense of control over one's life. Any loss is followed by grief. And this has led to feelings of helplessness, depression, anxiety and even despair, which have limited productivity and the ability to relate with others [1]. In a study conducted in Ireland, it was found that the public health restrictions due to the pandemic and the respondents' sense of control are connected and that sense of control has an influential and enduring effect on depression status in restricted conditions, even after these have been lifted [2].

Introduced over 5 decades ago, the locus of control theory contends that the extent to which people believe they are in control greatly influences their attitudes toward challenging situations, affects their resilience, and governs their choice of coping strategies. The theory further states that there exists a continuum of control from internal to external. A strong internal locus of control (LOC) gives rise to the notion that events that happen to people are a result of their own decisions and actions, despite exerting any control over them. At the opposite end of the continuum, there are individuals with a strong external locus of control and they construe events as influenced by circumstances outside of their control. People who have a strong external locus of control depend on beliefs such as luck and fate in order to give meaning to their experiences [3].

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An online study conducted on respondents from the United States and five countries in Europe during the Covid-19 pandemic yielded results that show having an external locus of control relates to more symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression [4]. In another study conducted in the Middle East and North African regions, hospitality customer service employees with external locus of control are more prone to suffer greater alienation, anxiety and depression than those with internal locus of control during the pandemic [5].

In yet another study, external locus of control was significantly positively correlated with diminished physical and mental health in male and female subjects after adjustment of lifestyle habits and lifestyle change caused by the pandemic [6]. Another study on students found that external locus of control was positively associated with psychological distress [7]. In the area of academic performance, it was discovered that as locus of control became more external, academic self-efficacy decreased. A significant inverse relationship was established between external locus of control and academic self-efficacy [8].

A research conducted on adults found that external health locus of control had a significant relationship with depression [9]. In a study that investigated the relationship between depression, anxiety and health locus of control in teenagers, it was discovered that internal health locus of control had an inverse relationship with both depression and anxiety as a state, while the external health locus of control had a positive association with depression and anxiety [10].

In a study that investigated internal health locus of control (IHLC), powerful others health locus of control (PHLC), and chance health locus of control (CHLC), respondents from and Indonesia, China and India (Asia) were compared to those from Hungary, Bulgaria and Germany (Europe). It found that Asian collectivistic culture tended towards powerful others health locus of control (doctors, medical institutions). In the European individualistic culture, females were more independent and had a much lower tendency for powerful others health locus of control than Asian females. European males on the other hand, relied more on internal health locus of control than Asian males [11].

Concerning Filipino students, a study conducted by Philippine One Health University Network and the Southeast Asian One Health University Network in 2021 found that in the National Capital Region, 19 percent of the students reported experiencing high stress levels, 22 percent reported having depressive symptoms and 36 percent reported experiencing anxiety [12].

Filipinos are known for a tendency towards fatalism, which is often embodied in the phrase “Bahala na.” It connotes resignation to the consequences of one’s undertaking and an attitude that having free will is not enough to change what may happen in the end [13]. Some scholars attempt to explain the use of this Filipino phrase as an admission to a lack of internal locus of control, which indicates that Filipinos do not believe they have the power to modify their lives [14]. In the article *Filipino Traits and Custom* by Teodoro A. Agoncillo, he states that the Filipino people are in general unavoidably fatalistic and neither science nor logic can dissuade him from this. As a consequence, whatever occurs in a Filipino’s life is the work of fate [15].

In view of the foregoing, this study focused on college students from Camarines Norte, Philippines in order to investigate the type of locus of control that they possess and what profile factors influence this.

In particular, this study sought to address the following research questions:

- What is the frequency of internal and external locus of control among the respondents when grouped according to
  - Sex;
  - Parental status (living together, separated or only one is alive) and
  - Romantic status (with or without romantic involvement)?
- Is there a relationship between the respondents’ internal and external locus of control and their
  - Sex;
  - Parental status (living together, separated or only one is alive) and
  - Romantic status (with or without romantic involvement)?

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## 2. Material and Methods

Through self-selection sampling, 226 college students from various public and private colleges in Camarines Norte, Philippines volunteered to be the respondents of this study. The respondents were enrolled in a variety of degree programs including Education, Engineering, Hospitality Management, Psychology and Business Administration. Their

mean age was 19.74. The Locus of Control instrument based on Rotter [16] was used to assess the locus of control of the respondents. This instrument has 13 items with 2 statements each. One statement is for external LOC while the other is for internal LOC. The respondent chooses only 1 statement per item. External LOC items are assigned a zero score, while internal LOC items are assigned 1 point each. A respondent may receive a score within the range of 0 to 13. For purposes of identifying the LOC of the respondent, a score from 0-6 indicates an external LOC while a score of 7-13 indicates an internal LOC.

### 3. Results

The following tables present the data gathered and the statistical treatments applied in order to answer the research questions of this study.

**Table 1** Locus of Control Item 1 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 1	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	People's misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.	190	84.07%
External	Many of the unhappy things in people's lives are partly due to bad luck	36	15.93%

**Table 2** Locus of Control Item 2 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 2	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	One of the major reasons why we have wars is because people don't take enough interest in politics.	84	37.17%
External	There will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them.	142	62.83%

**Table 3** Locus of Control Item 3 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 3	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	In the long run, people get the respect they deserve in this world.	97	42.92%
External	Unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries.	129	57.08%

**Table 4** Locus of Control Item 4 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 4	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	The idea that teachers are unfair to students is nonsense.	64	28.32%
External	Most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings.	162	71.68%

**Table 5** Locus of Control Item 5 Response Frequencies and Percentages

<b>Locus of Control</b>	<b>Statement set 5</b>	<b>Number of respondents who chose the statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Internal	Capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities.	117	51.77%
External	Without the right breaks, one cannot be an effective leader.	109	48.23%

**Table 6** Locus of Control Item 6 Response Frequencies and Percentages

<b>Locus of Control</b>	<b>Statement set 6</b>	<b>Number of respondents who chose the statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Internal	People who can't get others to like them don't understand how to get along with others.	42	18.58%
External	No matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you.	184	81.42%

**Table 7** Locus of Control Item 7 Response Frequencies and Percentages

<b>Locus of Control</b>	<b>Statement set 7</b>	<b>Number of respondents who chose the statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Internal	Trusting to fate has never turned out as well for me as making a decision to take a definite course of action.	104	46.02%
External	I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.	122	53.98%

**Table 8** Locus of Control Item 8 Response Frequencies and Percentages

<b>Locus of Control</b>	<b>Statement set 8</b>	<b>Number of respondents who chose the statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Internal	In the case of the well-prepared student, there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test.	154	68.14%
External	Many times exam questions tend to be so unrelated to course work that studying is really useless.	72	31.86%

**Table 9** Locus of Control Item 9 Response Frequencies and Percentages

<b>Locus of Control</b>	<b>Statement set 9</b>	<b>Number of respondents who chose the statement</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Internal	Becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it.	152	67.26%
External	Getting a good job depends mainly on being in the right place at the right time.	74	32.74%

**Table 10** Locus of Control Item 10 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 10	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	The average citizen can have an influence in government decisions.	146	64.60%
External	This world is run by the few people in power, and there is not much the little guy can do about it.	80	35.40%

**Table 11** Locus of Control Item 11 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 11	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.	162	71.68%
External	It is not always wise to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of luck anyway.	64	28.32%

**Table 12** Locus of Control Item 12 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 12	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck.	185	81.86%
External	Many times we might just as well decide what to do by flipping a coin.	41	18.14%

**Table 13** Locus of Control Item 13 Response Frequencies and Percentages

Locus of Control	Statement set 13	Number of respondents who chose the statement	Percentage
Internal	What happens to me is my own doing.	101	44.69%
External	Sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking.	125	55.31%

**Table 14** Locus of Control when grouped according to Sex

	External Locus of Control (Score range: 0 - 6)	Percentage with External LOC	Internal Locus of Control (Score range: 7 - 13)	Percentage with Internal LOC
Male N= 69	26	37.68 %	43	62.32 %
Female N = 157	63	40.13 %	94	59.87 %

**Table 15** Locus of Control when grouped according to Romantic Status

	<b>External Locus of Control (Score range: 0 – 6)</b>	<b>Percentage with External LOC</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control (Score range: 7 – 13)</b>	<b>Percentage with Internal LOC</b>
With Romantic N= 83	37	44.58 %	46	55.42 %
Without Romantic N = 143	52	36.36 %	91	63.64 %

**Table 16** Locus of Control when grouped according to Parental Status

	<b>External Locus of Control (Score range: 0 – 6)</b>	<b>Percentage with External LOC</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control (Score range: 7 – 13)</b>	<b>Percentage with Internal LOC</b>
Parents living together N= 160	62	38.75 %	98	61.25 %
Parents are separated N = 33	16	48.48 %	17	51.52 %
Only one parent is alive N= 33	11	33.33 %	22	66.67 %

**Table 17** Overall Locus of Control Frequencies and Percentages

	<b>External Locus of Control (Score range: 0 – 6)</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control (Score range: 7 – 13)</b>
Respondents	89	137
Percentage	39.38%	60.62%

**Table 18** Chi Square Contingency Table Locus of Control and Sex

	<b>External Locus of Control 0-6</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control 7-13</b>	<b>Marginal Row Totals</b>
Male	26 (27.17) [0.05]	43 (41.83) [0.03]	69
Female	63 (61.83) [0.02]	94 (95.17) [0.01]	157
Marginal Column Totals	89	137	226 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 0.1202. The p-value is .728867. Not significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 19** Chi Square Contingency Table Locus of Control and Parental Status

	<b>External Locus of Control 0-6</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control 7-13</b>	<b>Marginal Row Totals</b>
Parents one is alive	11 (13.00) [0.31]	22 (20.00) [0.20]	33

Parents together	62 (63.01) [0.02]	98 (96.99) [0.01]	160
Parents separated	16 (13.00) [0.69]	17 (20.00) [0.45]	33
Marginal Column Totals	89	137	226 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 1.678. The p-value is .432149. The result is not significant at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 20** Chi Square Contingency Table Locus of Control and Romantic Status

	<b>External Locus of Control 0-6</b>	<b>Internal Locus of Control 7-13</b>	<b>Marginal Row Totals</b>
With romantic	37 (32.69) [0.57]	46 (50.31) [0.37]	83
Without romantic	52 (56.31) [0.33]	91 (86.69) [0.21]	143
Marginal Column Totals	89	137	226 (Grand Total)

The chi-square statistic is 1.4845. The p-value is .223065. Not significant at  $p < .05$ .

#### 4. Discussion

In Table 1, it can be observed that 84.07% of the respondents believe that people’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 1.

In Table 2, it can be seen that 62.83% of the respondents believe that there will always be wars, no matter how hard people try to prevent them, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 2.

In Table 3, it can be observed that 57.08% of the respondents believe that unfortunately, an individual's worth often passes unrecognized no matter how hard he tries, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 3.

In Table 4, it can be seen that 71.68% of the respondents believe that most students don't realize the extent to which their grades are influenced by accidental happenings, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 4.

In Table 5, it can be observed that 51.77% of the respondents believe that capable people who fail to become leaders have not taken advantage of their opportunities, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 5.

In Table 6, it can be seen that 81.42% of the respondents believe that no matter how hard you try, some people just don't like you, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 6.

In Table 7, it can be observed that 53.98% of the respondents believe that they have often found that what is going to happen will happen, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 7.

In Table 8, it can be seen that 68.14% of the respondents believe that in the case of the well-prepared student, there is rarely, if ever, such a thing as an unfair test, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 8.

In Table 9, it can be observed that 67.26% of the respondents believe that becoming a success is a matter of hard work; luck has little or nothing to do with it, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 9.

In Table 10, it can be seen that 64.60% of the respondents believe that the average citizen can have an influence in government decisions, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 10.

In Table 11, it can be observed that 71.68% of the respondents believe that when I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 11.

In Table 12, it can be seen that 81.86% of the respondents believe that getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck, which indicates that majority have internal locus of control for item 12.

In Table 13, it can be observed that 55.31% of the respondents believe that sometimes I feel that I don't have enough control over the direction my life is taking, which indicates that majority have external locus of control for item 13.

Based on Tables 1-13 that indicate the frequencies and percentages of the respondents who chose a particular statement for the 13 items of the locus of control instrument, in items 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 13 the majority of the respondents exhibited an external locus of control.

In Table 14, majority of both males and females have internal locus of control. However, percentage-wise, there are more males who have internal locus of control than females. In Table 15, majority of respondents with and without romantic involvement have internal locus of control. However, percentage-wise, there are more respondents without romantic involvement who possess internal locus of control than those with romantic involvement. In Table 16, majority of respondents whose parents are living together, whose parents are separated and who have only one surviving parent have internal locus of control. However, percentage-wise, those with only one surviving parent possess the most internal locus of control followed by those with parents who are living together and lastly by those whose parents are separated.

In Table 17, it can be seen that 137 respondents or 60.62% possess internal locus of control and 89 or 39.38% have external locus of control. Relating this with the numerous studies associating external locus of control with poor mental health, it would appear that the proportion of those with external locus control closely coincides with the percentage (36 %) of those who experienced anxiety<sup>12</sup> among Filipino students during the pandemic.

In Tables 18, 19 and 20 it can be observed that the chi square computations between locus of control and sex, parental status and romantic status yielded no significant relationships between these variables.

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## 5. Conclusion

In 6 out of 13 items of the locus of control instrument, the respondents exhibited an external locus of control. This implies that fatalism as a form of external locus of control still exists in the thinking of the respondents. However, since 60.62% or a majority of the entire sample of respondents yielded scores which indicate that they possess internal locus of control, this contradicts the claim that Filipinos in general are fatalistic and would appear that fatalism as a form of external locus of control is on the decline. Sex, parental status and romantic status do not appear to be factors in the respondents' locus of control. Further studies are recommended in the future to see whether the proportion of individuals who possess internal and external locus of control will change when the COVID-19 pandemic has finally ended.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

### *Acknowledgments*

The authors wish to express their gratitude to the respondents who volunteered for this study and to the author of the Locus of Control instrument based on Rotter.

### *Disclosure of conflict of interest*

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study.

### *Statement of ethical approval*

The authors further state that the ethical standards of research were strictly followed.

### *Statement of informed consent*

The informed consent of all the research participants was obtained, their responses were acquired anonymously and the data gathered was used purely for the purpose of making this study.

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