

Impact of Locus of Control on Job Stress: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

Locus of Control (LOC) concept was evolved from social learning theory of personality in the form of reinforcement. Rotter coined the term in relation to learned behavior and the reinforcement of such behavior. In the light of the phenomenon, individuals come to hold beliefs about the cause of their actions, and these beliefs then guide their attitudes and behavior for future actions. Job stress is inability to cope with the pressures of the job. Job stress may cost 10% to the GDP of any economy. Apart from the financial costs, the employee may suffer from many physiological and psychological diseases. One of the major sources of job stress was found to be the personality of the individual. This study attempts to analyse the impact of locus of control on job stress. The researchers attempt to assess whether internal or external locus of control relates to job stress of the employees. 100 employees were surveyed in the study. Job Stress and Locus of Control Questionnaires were administered to the employees. The analysis revealed that the Indian employees are facing high job stress. It was found that employees who have internal locus of control are less stressed by their jobs and more satisfied with the organization while the external locus of control employees are high on stress and more dissatisfied with their jobs. The study suggests that while designing any stress management programme, management should give due consideration to the variable of Locus of Control.

Keywords: Locus of Control (LOC), Job Stress, Sources of Stress, Internal Locus

Introduction

Stress has become one of the most serious health issues of the twentieth century, a problem not just for individuals in terms of physical and mental morbidity, but for employers, governments and the society at large who have started to assess the financial damage (ILO, 1993). Work-related stress is very costly. It has been estimated that 12% of the US's GNP and 10% of the UK's GNP is lost due to stress related absenteeism and turnover (Cartwright & Cooper, 1996; Quick & Quick, 1984). Stress can be defined as the reaction of individuals to demands (stressors) imposed upon them (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006). All stress is not harmful. A

moderate amount of stress is essential for personal enhancement and organizational success. But, stress more than an optimum limit decreases performance and creates disorders within the individual. Occupational stress is the inability to cope with the pressures of the job. It is a mental and physical condition which affects an individual's productivity, effectiveness, personal health and quality of work (Comish & Swindle, 1994). The workplace stands out as a potentially important source of stress purely because of the amount of time that is spent in this setting (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2006).

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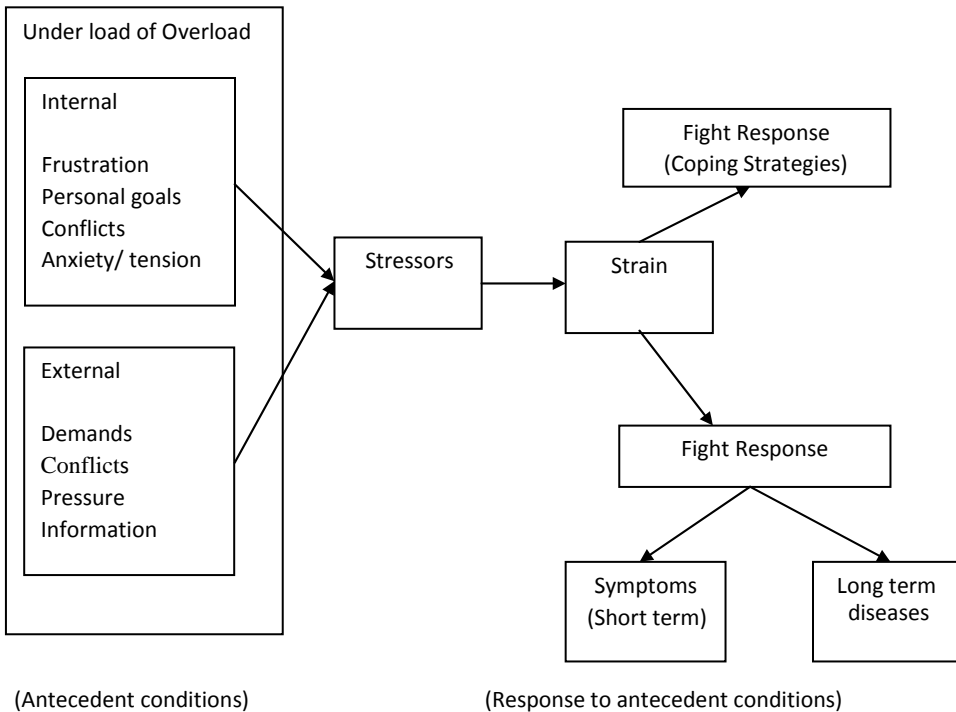


Figure 1.1: Organizational Stress-Strain Model

Source: Developed by Author

The researcher has developed one model (Figure 1.1). Stress may occur due to under-load and overload of matter, energy and information of internal and external environment. Internal environment may include frustration, personal goals, conflicts, and anxiety or tension of the individual. External stressors may consist of demands, conflicts, pressure and information from the surroundings of the individual. These antecedent conditions may create stress within the individual. The response of these antecedent conditions can arise in the terms of strain. The individual tries to defend himself by fight or flight response. By fight response, an individual tries to use various coping strategies to reduce or overcome the ill effects of strain. But, if the individual doesn't use any coping strategy or use any inadequate coping strategy or the stressors are very severe in nature, flight response may occur. It can create physical and psychological disorders. These disorders can last for short time in the form of acute symptoms or can change in long term diseases.

In absolute terms, the causes of work stress are categorized into two groups, namely, job related stressors and individual related stressors. Job related stressors may be the factors intrinsic to job, role in organization, career development, relationship at work and organizational structure and climate while individual related stressors may be the level of anxiety, level of neuroticism, tolerance for ambiguity, personality traits, locus of control, family problems and financial difficulties (Cooper et al., 1976). Thus, locus of control may be individual factor that can change the level of stress.

The word locus of control was emerged from social learning theory given by Rotter (1954). Locus of control is a term in psychology that refers to a person's belief about what causes the good or bad results in his life, either in general or in a specific area such as job, health or academics. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own

behavior and actions. It refers to sometimes personality trait reflecting the generalized belief that either event in life is controlled by one's own actions (an internal LOC) or by outside influences (an external LOC). Those with an internal LOC believe that they can exert control over life events and circumstances, including the associated reinforcements, that is, those outcomes which are perceived to reward one's behaviors and attitudes. In contrast, those with an external LOC believe they have little control over life events and circumstances, and attribute reinforcements to powerful others or to luck (Sundaresh, 2010). It was found from the research that the persons who have external locus of control (externals), believe on more fate, chance, luck and powerful others oriented are positively correlated with job stress or general stress in comparison to persons who are internally located (Daniels et al., 1992).

Review of Literature

Chris et al. (1979) carried out a study on 130 teachers of 11 schools in England. The data was collected through a stress questionnaire and Rotter's I-E locus of control questionnaire. The results showed that the external located teachers were positively correlated with job stress.

Schmitz et al (2000) undertook a study on 361 staff nurses to evaluate the effect of locus of control and work related stress on burnout. The survey was done through Maslach Burning Inventory, Locus of Control Questionnaire and Work-related stress inventory. Results support the hypothesized model and suggested that greater work-related stress and burnout would be associated with poorer locus of control in nurses. The findings supported the notion that perceived degree of control is instrumental in enabling nurses to cope with stress and burnout.

Lu et al (2000) investigated managerial stress in Taiwan and UK using the Occupational Stress Indicator 2 (OSI 2) and Work Locus of Control (WLCS). There were consistent moderating (vulnerability) effects of internal control for the Taiwanese managers. It was also found that Recognition and Managerial role were important predictors of strain for the Chinese managers, whereas Relationships, Organizational climate, and Locus of control were important predictors of strain for UK managers.

Glazera et al (2004) examined the effects of Type A/B pattern, locus of control on job stress. Data was collected from 2032 nurses of 19 hospitals. External locus of control positively related to job stress, and this relationship was different across countries. Type A was positively related to stress in Italy, Israel, and USA, though the correlations were not significantly different from each other across countries.

Hsu-I Huang (2006) exhibited that male culinary arts workers had a higher degree of internal locus of control than female culinary arts workers. Internal locus of control was significantly and positively correlated with employee job satisfaction.

Sundaresh (2010) carried out a study on 100 team leaders working in three different IT companies to find out the relationship between locus of control and job stress using Occupational Stress Index and Work Locus of Control. The result showed that the team leaders having external locus of control scored high on all twelve sub scales of the occupational stress than the team leaders who had internal locus of control.

Objectives

- To understand the concept of locus of control among the employees.
- To identify the level of organizational stress among the employees.
- To find out the correlation between inter internal locus of control and external locus of control with organizational stress.

Methodology

Data was collected by random sampling from 100 employees of the different sectors. Two questionnaires, namely Organizational Role Stress (ORS) scale and Work Locus of Control (WLCS) along with demographical factors of the employees were administrated through survey. ORS scale includes 50 statements on 5 point likert scale and WLCS includes 16 statements also on 5 point likert scale. The data was collected from the state of Uttar Pradesh. The data was analyzed through the help of SPSS 16.0.

Hypothesis

- H01: There is no significant correlation between internal locus of control and organizational stress of the employees.
- H02: There is no significant correlation between external locus of control and organizational stress of the employees.
- H03: There is no significant difference on organizational stress with respect to socio-demographical factors of age, gender, education.

Table 4.1.1: Demographical Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Age		
21-30	70	70
31-40	20	20
41-50	10	10
Gender		
Male	70	70
Female	30	30
Education		
Intermediate	17	17
Graduate	30	30
Post Graduate	53	53

Reliability:

It was found from the reliability analysis that the cronbach alpha value of the WLCS scale has been found to be 0.67 while the cronbach alpha value for the ORS scale was found to be 0.92 (Table 4.2.1). The researches supported that the Cronbach Alpha value greater than 0.6 is acceptable for further analysis (Hair et al., 1998). Therefore, the data is valid for further analysis.

Table 4.2.1: Reliability of the Scales

Scale Name	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
WLCS	0.67	16
ORS	0.92	50

5. Results and Discussion

Table 5.1: Overall ORS score

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
ORS	100	.72	4.00	2.2328	1.25034
Valid N (listwise)	100				

The table 5.1 shows that the employees are facing fair amount of stress as the mean value of stress was found 2.32 on 5 point likert scale ranging zero to four.

Table 5.2: Status of Stressors

Stressors	Mean	SD	Remarks
IRD	2.30	1.13440	High Medium
RS	2.52	1.34900	High Medium
REC	2.00	1.44110	Medium
RE	2.48	1.31871	High Medium
RO	2.24	1.35079	High Medium
RI	2.18	1.39393	High Medium
PI	2.02	1.48106	Medium
SRD	2.32	1.32177	High Medium
RA	1.90	1.34915	Low Medium
RIn	2.36	1.18466	High Medium

The table 5.2 clearly depicts that the employees surveyed are mostly facing medium high stress on most of the stressors. They are facing highest stress due to Role Erosion while least stressful stressor was found Role Ambiguity.

Table 5.3: Stress and Demographics

Variables	Mean value	SD	t/f value	Sig.	Remarks
Gender			.060	.952	Not Rejected
Male	2.23	1.21			
Female	2.21	1.34			
Age			5.768	.004*	Rejected
21-30	2.02	1.13			
31-40	2.37	1.61			
41-50	3.38	0.30			
Education			27.38	.000*	Rejected
Intermediate	3.35	0.71			
Graduate	1.20	0.32			
PG	2.45	1.29			

The findings on table 5.3 depicts that gender has not any significant difference in the stress level of the employees i.e. both the males and females are facing same role stress. But, age and education have significant differences on the stress level of the employees. The older employees of age 41 to 50 years are facing higher stress than younger employees ($f=5.768$, $p=.004$). Similarly the less qualified respondents having education of Intermediate were facing more role stress than graduate and post graduate employees ($f=27.38$, $p=.000$). Graduate employees are facing least stress among all the educational groups. Thus, hypothesis H03 stating that there is no significant difference between stress and socio-demographical factor is partially rejected and partially accepted.

Regression Analysis:

The major objective of the present study was to find out the relation of locus of control and stress. Therefore, Regression analysis was run on the sample by two times. First time, it was run to know the relation of internal locus of control and stress while second time it was conducted to find out the relationship of external locus of control and organizational role stress.

Locus of Control and Organizational Role Stress:

The adjusted R square value was found 5.4%. The adjusted R square value indicates 54% variation in dependent variable i.e. ORS is explained by independent variables of locus of control. The beta value was calculated 0.232 and the significant value was calculated 0.020. This is showing that locus of control is significantly

impacting the organizational stress among the employees (Table 5.1.1.1).

Table 5.1.1.1: Regression Table

Variable	R square value	Beta Value	Sig. Value
Locus of Control	0.054	0.232	.020*

Impact of Internal/External Locus of Control and Organizational Role Stress:

The table 5.1.2.1 clearly is showing the positive and negative correlation of external locus of control and internal locus of control on organizational stress of the employees. For internal locus of control, the R square value was calculated 0.387 and beta value was found 0.622 which is negative and significant value was calculated 0.000. This is showing that the internal locus of control has significant negative correlation with organizational role stress. It means that internals are negatively correlated with stress. If internal locus of control will increase, stress will decrease. Thus, hypothesis H01 stating there is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and stress is rejected.

Table 5.1.2.1: Regression Table

Variable	R square value	Beta Value	Sig. Value	Remarks
Internal Locus of Control	0.387	-0.622	.000*	Rejected
External Locus of Control	0.448	0.669	.000*	Rejected

On the other hand, for internal locus of control, the R square value was calculated 0.448 and beta value was found 0.669 which is positive and significant value was calculated 0.000 (Table 5.1.2.1). This is showing that the external locus of control has significant positive correlation with organizational role stress. It means that externals are positively correlated with stress. If external locus of control will increase, stress will increase. Thus, hypothesis H02 stating there is no significant relationship between external locus of control and stress is rejected.

Conclusion /Implications

The study concludes with the notion that employees are facing medium high level of stress. The employees are facing role erosion more than other role stressors. It was also found that age and education have significant differences on organizational role stress of the employees. It was also found that locus of control has significant impact on role stress. The present study establishes and supplements the existing literature that the internal locus of control is negatively correlated with organizational stress and external locus of control is positively correlated with stress. It was found that internal employees are facing less job stress while external employees are facing more job stress. The present research suggests the management to identify the locus of control of the employees and design their training stress management programmes while taking locus of control into consideration. The paper also suggests the employees that they should develop internal locus of control by learning to effectively cope with the job stress.

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