



## Career Locus of Control: A Comparative Analysis between Management and Arts Undergraduates of University of Ruhuna

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### Abstract

Believing that career outcomes are largely dependent on one's own actions rather than forces outside of one's control, is very important for all undergraduates as prospective employees. Management literature defines above phenomena as Career Locus of Control. The objective of this paper was to investigate whether the undergraduates are internally or externally locus of control oriented. Moreover the research was aimed at determining whether there was a significant difference of orientation among management and arts undergraduates. The research was conducted as a survey, where a structured questionnaire was administered among a sample of 340 Undergraduates. Sample was selected using random sampling while maintaining 50% balance among these two undergraduate groups. Questionnaire was developed based on Spector's (1988) "Measure of work locus of control" and carried 20 separate scale questions. Mean comparison and t-test were used to prove the hypotheses. Research accepted the two hypotheses which stated that, Management undergraduates are more internal locus of control oriented compared to their Arts counterparts and Arts undergraduates are more external locus of control oriented compared to their Management counterparts.

**Keywords:** External Orientation; Internal Orientation; Locus of Control; Other Orientation

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### Introduction

Career is of significant importance for every individual, thus individuals can be motivated through providing clear career development paths. But at the same time since career progression is a process which runs through three time lines, namely past present and future it is inevitable that there will be uncertainty element included. Miller (1994) argues that when individuals hold strong expectations that they can influence their career trajectories through personal involvement, it may be anticipated that they will seek to engage more readily in, and throughout, the process of career development and associated guidance interventions. Moreover Those holding strong internal expectations of control over future career related rewards may be more likely to be ego involved in the process of career decision making by demonstrating a degree of personal agency and initiative, and be more self-motivated (Blustein, 1988). Believing that whether things are under control of his or her actions or are not under control of his or her actions would be largely determined by one's own attitudes, and beliefs. How

ever believing that career outcomes are largely dependent on one's own actions rather than forces outside of one's control, is very important for all undergraduates as prospective employees. Management Literature defines above phenomena as Career Locus of Control. Despite the importance of the area as far as author knowledge is concerned there have been no empirical studies in the context of undergraduates. Therefore the objective of this paper is to investigate whether the undergraduates are internally, externally or other locus of control oriented in order to find out is there any relationship between discipline they study and their career locus of control. Moreover the research was aimed at determining whether there is a significant difference of orientation among these two undergraduate groups.

Objective of the research was to determine whether there are significant differences among career locus of control orientation between Management and Arts undergraduates. With this objective research developed following hypotheses.

- H1:* Management undergraduates are more internal locus of control oriented compared to their Arts counterparts.
- H2:* Arts undergraduates are more external locus of control oriented compared to their Management counterparts.
- H3:* Arts undergraduates are more other locus of control oriented compared to their Management counterparts.

### Litreature Review

Knowledge of the working world and career locus of control are associated with career decision making. "Locus of control is the extent to which individuals attribute the events in their lives to actions or forces beyond their control" (Bello, 2001, p.25). Moreover, *Adams et al.*, (2008, p.110) defined it as "a personality factor that influences individuals' self evaluation, attitudes toward work, motivation, learning ability, and working performance". According to, Rotter's (1954) social learning theory which is a bi-dimensional measure of an individual's attitude about himself and his environment leans toward either an internal or external focus. Further, they describe those with an internal focus recognize that they have control over their environment and their life and those with an external focus tend to view the world as an environment that acts without them and therefore consider themselves incapable of influencing their environments. Furthermore, when individuals believe that they have very little control over what happens to them, they are considered to have an external locus of control. According to Bello, (2001, p.25) "The one that believes that the events in his or her life are the result of circumstances beyond his/her control (i.e. these events are the result of fate, chance, luck, or destiny) will be classified as an 'external' or one with an external locus of control". As Selart (2005, p.397) pointed out if a person likes to explain the reward as something that is come upon his or her own behaviour, it is referred to as internal locus of control. In contrast, if a person likes to explain the reward as a result of external factors such as luck, chance, fate and powerful others, it is referred to as external locus of control. Locus of control has proved to be valuable in investigations of organizational Phenomena (McCormick & Barnett, 2008, p.10) since it has been found to be related to organisational performance, as well as to individual variables such as work alienation, intentions to quit, job stress, and ability to deal with job demands (Bello,2001,p25). Moreover, Fusilier et al., (1987) and Mia, (1987); sated that, locus of control is related to job satisfaction, job

involvement, commitment, turnover, and leadership style. Above facts implies that commonly locus of control is related for career outcomes. For instance, Chen and Silverthorne (2008, p.579) found that when determine the level of job satisfaction, stress and performance of accountants' in CPA firms in Taiwan, locus of control plays an important role. Furthermore, he stated that, individuals with a higher internal locus of control are more likely to have lower levels of job stress and higher levels of job performance and satisfaction. In addition to that, Selart (2005, p.409) also found that, managers with low external locus of control used group consultative decision-making more frequently than those with high locus of control. Further he mentioned that, there was also a tendency showing that high externals more frequently used participative decision-making than low externals. Rodriguez and Blocher, (1988) also supported for this idea with their findings that is saying there were positive relationships between internal locus of control and career decision-making attitudes. Moreover, Chen, and Silverthorne, (2008,p.581), discovered that, respondents who had an internal locus of control perceived lower levels of job stress, reported higher levels of job satisfaction and job performance. Not only for the career development even for career choices locus of control plays a crucial role (Millar and Shevlin, 2007, p.225). Moreover, he stated that, those who are with internal expectations of control actively involve career decision making process while being more self-motivated (see Blustein, 1988; Ginzberg, 1972). In addition to that, they engage from actively searching out information (Blustein, 1988), participating in individual counselling sessions (Tinsley et al., 1994), and making career decisions and acting on the consequences, such as job search (Friedrich, 1987). In contrast, those who are with higher expectations of external control present somewhat different challenges for career service delivery (Millar and Shevlin, 2007p.225). In an educational context, according to Nelson et al., (1980) and Grimes et al.,(2004) students with high external or internal locus of control show significantly different perceptions of educational objectives and knowledge acquisition. Further Grimes et al., (2004), found that students with higher internal locus of control tend to attribute personal outcomes to self, while students with higher external locus of control tend to believe that teachers determine good or bad grades. At the same time, in an entrepreneurial context, Hansemark (1998, p.42), found that participation in an entrepreneurship programme led to a higher level of need for achievement and increase

internal orientation of locus of control. According to Rahim (1996) entrepreneurs and managers with high internal locus of control believes that they can cope with stress functionally and more effectively than someone with high external locus of control. After introducing Rotter's original Internal-External scale, number of domain-specific locus of control scales was developed (Millar and Shevlin, 2007, p.245). Those were related to various areas; health (Luszczynska and Schwarzer, 2005), academic achievements (Palenzuela, 1988) and sales (Chung and Ding, 2002). However, there were some problems surrounding domain specificity, multidimensionality, and conceptual clarity (Millar and Shevlin, 2007, p.226). Therefore, in this study researchers used the scale specific to the domain of adolescent career development and choice developed by the Millar and Shevlin in 2007. Specially, this scale was employed since it is useful in the career guidance process as a means of indicating the extent to which young people would evolve and contribute in the process and assume responsibility for the future path of their careers (Millar and Shevlin, 2007, p.226). Further "Career Locus of Control Scale" the scale used by this study has produced scores that are reliable and valid over different time periods as well as over different contexts.

**Methodology**

Survey method was used for the study. Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires

given to the undergraduates at university premises. Population includes all under graduates who are studying in the Faculties of Management & Finance and Humanities & Social Sciences in the University of Ruhuna. 340 students were selected randomly; number was determined to make sure that at least 10% of the population is included in the sample. Here a questionnaire was administered for the third student for every five students who entered the main student canteen at University of Ruhuna. Where a basic screening was done to select third & final year students since they have spent enough time with their discipline compared to first and second year students who might need more time to be changed by the discipline. Questionnaire was based on Spector's (1988) "Measure of work locus of control" and carried 20 scale questions. Pilot study was initially carried out in order to fine tune the questionnaire, certain questions were adjusted for wording but pilot study did not recommend any major changes to the instrument. This study was carried out among 35 respondents to represent 10% of the sample. Figure 01 shows the conceptual model and Table 01 shows the operationalization of variables. Questionnaire carried scale type questions where respondents were provided with statements which they could have strongly agree, agree, slightly agree, neither agree nor disagree, slightly disagree, disagree and strongly disagree; scores of 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 were assigned respectively for above mentioned categories. Research used mean comparison and t-tests to test above mentioned hypotheses.

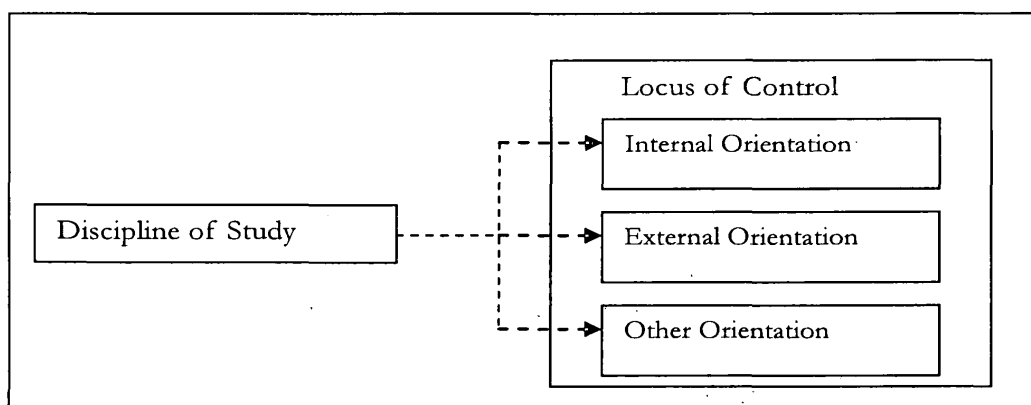


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Table 01. Operationalization of Variables

Locus of Control	Internal Orientation	In 01	If I am to get the job I want I will have to do well and try hard
		In 02	If I get a good job it will be a direct result of my own ability and motivation.
		In 03	If I do not get the job offers I want then I will have to work harder
		In 04	The job I will get will depend mainly on how well I do and how hard I try
		In 05	I believe that through my own efforts I will be able to be anything I choose
	External Orientation	Ex01	Whether I get the job I want or not will depend on whether chance factors, or luck, are working in my favor
		Ex02	Luck is the most important factor in determining whether I will get the job I want.
		Ex03	I expect luck to play a major part in determining what job I will get.
		Ex04	Luck or timing will matter more than careful planning in determining whether I will be successful in getting the job I want.
		Ex05	Whether I get a good job in the future will depend a lot on whether I get the right turn of fate.
		Ex06	It will be an absolute waste of time for me to make any effort because there will be no relationship between how able I am or how hard I try and whether or not I get the job I want
		Ex07	It does not matter what I want or what I want to do because I will simply have to take whatever job I am offered.
		Ex08	There is nothing I can do to increase my chances of getting a decent job
	Ex09	Most of the time it doesn't pay to try too hard because things never turn out right anyway	
	Other Orientation	Ot01	The job I will get will not be chosen by me as the most suitable, but it will be chosen by society for me
		Ot02	It is not what I do that will get me the job that I want —rather it will be more dependant on what my parents or relatives do for me
		Ot03	It makes absolutely no difference whether I prepare well for the job I want or whether I don't because in the long run employers will not give their jobs to people like me
		Ot04	I don't think that it is worth my while trying hard because the job I'll get will be completely determined by what other people do
Ot05		It doesn't matter what career I want —what I will be is in the hands of other people, like teachers and employers	
Ot06		Whether I get the job I want or not will depend on whether I meet the right people.	

### Results and Discussion

Sample consists of 340 undergraduates out of which 34% were males while remaining 66% were females. Further 163 respondents were belonging to the Faculty of Humanities & Social Science, while remaining 177 belongs to Faculty of Management & Finance. Same sample consists of 163 third year students and 177 final year students. The study had an overall reliability of 76% (Alpha = .7654) and separate variables had following reliabilities, Internal Orientation 77% (Alpha = .7692), External Orientation 67% (Alpha = .6705) and Other Orientation 78% (Alpha = .7817).

Internal locus of control orientation was analyzed using five variables. Here, management undergraduates have recorded higher mean scores across all five variables. See Table 02 for more information. Further with results of the t-test conducted by the researchers (see Table 03 for more details), the research can accept the first hypotheses which state that Management undergraduates are more internal locus of control oriented compared to their Arts counterparts and there are significant differences among these two undergraduate groups when it comes to internal locus of control orientation.

Table 02. Mean scores for Internal Orientation variables

Faculty		In 01	In 02	In 03	In 04	In 05	Internal Orientation
Arts	Mean	5.9018	5.5890	6.0798	5.0675	5.4049	5.6086
	N	163	163	163	163	163	163
	SD	1.4916	1.4645	1.3004	1.6819	1.5016	1.1260
MGT	Mean	6.6893	6.0904	6.2938	5.7345	5.7684	6.1153
	N	177	177	177	177	177	177
	SD	.5325	1.1346	.9436	1.0780	1.2328	.6211
Total	Mean	6.3118	5.8500	6.1912	5.4147	5.5941	5.8724
	N	340	340	340	340	340	340
	SD	1.1686	1.3252	1.1322	1.4375	1.3783	.9329

Table 03. Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
In 01	45.107	.000	-6.583	.000
In 02	13.654	.000	-3.545	.000
In 03	2.649	.082	-1.747	.082
In 04	34.277	.000	-4.388	.000
In 05	3.405	.015	-2.447	.015
Internal Orientation	18.206	.000	-5.191	.000

When analyzing the orientation towards external forces, again management undergraduate's record high mean scores across 5 sub variables except Ex 06, Ex07 and Ex08. But it is important to note here that all these mean scores are oriented towards negative responses or both management and arts undergraduates are not externally locus of control oriented (mean scores = 3.14 & 2.87 respectively for management and arts undergraduates). Table 04 provides more details. With the above results research rejects the second hypothesis which stated that arts undergraduates are more external locus of control oriented compared to their management counterparts. Last variable to analyze was Other Orientation. This was analyzed

using six dimensions. Here Arts undergraduates' record higher mean scores across five variables except Ot06 (mean score = 3.46 and 4.09 for arts and management undergraduates respectively). Just like the earlier variable the mean scores are pointed towards the negative side for both the undergraduate groups. Table 05 provides more details on this. As whole arts undergraduates have recoded a mean score of 2.48 while management undergraduates have recorded a mean score of 2.20. Therefore research rejected the third hypothesis stating that arts undergraduates are more other locus of control oriented compared to their management counterparts.

Table 04. Mean scores for External Orientation variables

Faculty		Ex01	Ex02	Ex03	Ex04	Ex05	Ex06	Ex07	Ex08	Ex09	External Orientation
Arts	M	3.4724	3.4417	2.6380	3.0000	3.3804	2.1595	3.4847	1.6074	2.6810	2.8739
	N	163	163	163	163	163	163	163	163	163	163
	SD	1.9126	1.7000	1.5429	1.7812	1.7715	1.3874	2.0708	1.2244	1.6693	1.0656
MGT	M	4.3616	4.0960	4.0960	3.4915	3.4181	2.0452	3.0226	1.5593	2.2203	3.1456
	N	177	177	177	177	177	177	177	177	177	177
	SD	1.3418	1.1759	1.5979	1.4737	1.5722	1.5144	3.7370	.7673	1.2210	.7616
Total	M	3.9353	3.7824	3.3971	3.2559	3.4000	2.1000	3.2441	1.5824	2.4412	3.0154
	N	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
	SD	1.6973	1.4853	1.7307	1.6445	1.6684	1.4539	3.0583	1.0113	1.4693	.9286

Table 05. Mean scores for Other Orientation variables

Faculty		Ot01	Ot02	Ot03	Ot04	Ot05	Ot06	Other Orientation
Arts	Mean	2.8160	2.1472	2.4663	2.0798	1.9693	3.4601	2.4898
	N	163	163	163	163	163	163	163
	SD	1.7821	1.4540	1.4023	1.4185	1.3260	1.8567	1.0786
MGT	Mean	2.1921	1.9605	1.8475	1.5254	1.5989	4.0960	2.2034
	N	177	177	177	177	177	177	177
	SD	1.1665	1.1792	.9259	.8123	.7780	1.7012	.7962
Total	Mean	2.4912	2.0500	2.1441	1.7912	1.7765	3.7912	2.3407
	N	340	340	340	340	340	340	340
	SD	1.5236	1.3194	1.2168	1.1752	1.0903	1.8031	.9516

### Conclusion

Objective of this research was to compare the level of locus of control orientation among Arts and Management undergraduates at University of Ruhuna to understand any influence of study discipline on locus of control orientation. In order to find this, research employed a self administered questionnaire among a group of 340 undergraduates. Research accepted the first hypothesis which stated that, Management undergraduates are more "internal" locus of control oriented compared to their Arts counterparts and rejected the second and third hypothesis which stated that & arts undergraduates are more "external" locus of control oriented compared to their management counterparts and arts undergraduates are more "other" locus of control oriented compared to their management counterparts. While noting these relationship researchers would like to highlight that irrespective of the discipline undergraduates is highly internal locus of control oriented. In fact, when it comes to external and other orientation, research compared the level of disagreement rather than agreement because all mean scores recorded for these two variables were negative. Finally researchers would like to conclude that although research accepted the first hypotheses there aren't any conclusive evidence of discipline influence on locus of control orientation as far as the research is concerned. But researchers would like to highlight the limitations of the study such as only taking one university as well as only taking two disciplines and therefore researchers feel the importance of more research been carried out in the same context to validate results.

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