

## **Locus of Control, Marital Satisfaction and Marital Stability among Newlyweds**

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### **Abstract**

The present study examined the relationship between locus of control with marital satisfaction and marital stability in a sample of 278 newlyweds. Participants completed the Demographic Information Sheet, The Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance (IPC) Scale, Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMSS) and Marital Instability Index (MII). Correlation analysis was employed to assess relationships among the variables. Result indicated that there is a negative significant relationship between external locus of control and marital satisfaction, but there is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital satisfaction. Whereas, there is no significant relationship between both locus of control with marital stability. This study incongruent with past research and contributes to the new findings on locus of control.

**Key words:** *locus of control, marital satisfaction, marital stability, newlyweds.*

### **Introduction**

Locus of control refers to the degree of control individuals perceived they have with regard to the consequences of their behavior (Rotter, 1966). Rotter argues that an individual's having a different ability to control what happened to them. Internal and external locus of control are the two dimensions of locus of control. Individuals who believes the outcomes of their actions as a result of their own behaviour and within their control is an internal locus of control person. While, an individual with an external locus of control believes the outcomes of their actions results from other factors which is beyond their control (i.e., luck, fate, chance, powerful others).

Additionally, locus of control is just one of many variables a person will use in resolving a particular situation. An individual's accomplishments, goals, and aspirations are largely based on an individual's locus of control, this includes their relationship. By understanding a person's locus of control, one could use it as an indicator to predict the behavioural patterns of an individual.

Moreover, locus of control is a very significant construct as it influences many peoples' beliefs and most people are not even aware of it. According to Tone, Goodfellow and Nowicki (2012) locus of control is related to a variety of variables, which include quality of parent-child relationships (Campis, Lyman, & Prentice-Dunn, 1986), marital problem solving, and functioning in general personal relationships (Miller, Lefcourt, & Ware, 1983).

Numerous studies also examine in the roles of locus of control in a person's daily life. Locus of control also affect individuals' educational and occupational attainments (Wang, Kick, Fraser & Burns, 1999); role ambiguity (H. Nejat Basim, Mehmet Erkenekli, & Harun Şeşen, 2010). Locus of control also may influence on organisational decision making (Selart, 2005); leadership, job satisfaction, motivation, job performance and life balance (Chatfield & Wooten, 2012).

Locus of control also associated with self-rated health (Anao Zhang and Yuri Jang, 2017); depression (Atefe Abdolmani, Mohamad Ali Besharat, Hojatollah Farahani, Mohamad Reza Khodaii, 2011); and stress (Khan, Saleem & Shahid, 2012). Generally, an internal locus of control is more beneficial than an external one. Even with uncontrollable variables present, individuals with a high internal locus of control will evaluate the stressors and determine how best to deal with or resolve circumstances to achieve their desired outcome (Marks, Richardson, & Graham, 1986).

So far, however, although marriage has a powerful effect on the sense of control, there has been little discussion on the relationship between marriage and locus of control (Ross, 1991). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between internal locus of control and external locus of control with marital satisfaction and marital stability.

### **Locus of control and marital relationship**

Individuals with higher internal locus of control were positively associated with higher levels of marital satisfaction (Askari Asghari Ganji & Drshokouh Navabinezhad, 2012). Those with an internal locus of control are apt to be goal driven (Hoffman Kupper, & Kunz, 2000) and most likely to engage in active efforts to solve their marital problems (Doherty, 1983; Doherty & Ryder, 1979).

Ganji and Navabinezhad (2012) examined the relationship between locus of control and marital satisfaction. They used 62 spouses as their respondents. Finding of these study showed that there was a significant relationship between internal locus of control and marital satisfaction of the spouses. Also, results showed that there is no significant difference between the gender and the type

of locus of control, gender and level of marital satisfaction of the spouses. Result reveal that spouse with external locus of control had dissatisfaction in marital relationship.

Fatemeh Solaimani (2014) aimed at comparing locus of control and quality of life in spouses with high and low marital satisfaction. The study involved 30 spouses with high and 30 spouses with low marital satisfaction. Result showed that external locus of control person has lower marital satisfaction.

Mostadim (2016) investigated whether an individual's locus of control orientation (be it internal or external) could contribute to his or her level of marital satisfaction. The study also determined could a person's locus of control be a plausible predictor for marital satisfaction? Finding showed internal locus of control hypothesis postulates that individuals whom have an internal locus of control orientation are more likely to report higher marital satisfaction.

Futhermore, a person's locus of control can affect the probability of success or failure of a marriage. Spouses with a greater sense of control are less likely to end their marriage (Lachman & Weaver, 1998). Myers (1999) argued that an internal locus of control is a personal resource, and coping style, that buffers the deleterious effects of marital problems and may locate individuals in strong or weak marriages.

On contrary, a study by Mlott and Lira (1977) involving 44 spouses shows that there were no differences in locus of control between stable and unstable marriages, but only differences between partners in unstable marriages by which wives were more external than husbands. Wives in unstable marriages were high in external locus of control and believed that the factors affected their unstable marriages were beyond their control (Bugights, Schumm, Bollman, & Jurich, 1983). In other words, wives' internal locus of control was associated with more stable marriages. This study also been supported by Doherty (1981).

Moreover, those with an internal locus of control are more cautious and calculating about their choices and involvements (Lefcourt, 1992) and may change their behaviors easily as they believe that they can control the reinforcements (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, and Storaasli, 1988).

In sum, the past studies consistently revealed that those who have internal locus of control are satisfied with their marriage whereas those with an external locus of control person are dissatisfied with their marriage. Whereas, there is mixed results on the relationship between locus of control and marital stability based on previous literature. Research on the roles of locus of control in marital relationship among Malaysians are at scarce. If indeed locus of control is a critical element

that can affects marriage, therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between internal and external locus of control with marital satisfaction and marital stability.

## Method

### Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative approach and cross sectional research designs.

### Participants

The study sample is comprised of two hundred and seventy-eight newlyweds (1-5 years of marriage) in Putrajaya, Selangor, Kedah, Kelantan, Johor and Sabah were recruited for the current study.

### Characteristics of the respondents and spouse

**Table 1: Background of respondents and couple characteristics**

Background variable	Frequency	Percentage
Personal Characteristic		
Age		
25-30	134	48.2
31-35	122	43.9
36-40	19	6.8
41-45	2	0.7
46-50	1	0.4
Educational level		
Primary	1	0.4
PMR	5	1.8
SPM	57	20.5
STPM	28	10.1
Certificate	17	6.1
Diploma	97	34.9
Degree	68	24.5
Master	5	1.8
Spouse characteristic		
Age		
25-30	134	48.5
31-35	110	39.6
36-40	25	9.0
41-45	6	2.2
46-50	1	0.4
51- 55	1	0.4
56-60	0	0
61-65	1	0.4
Education		
Primary	9	3.2
PMR	68	24.5
SPM	21	7.6

STPM	18	6.5
Certificate	77	27.7
Diploma	70	25.2
Degree	14	5.0
Master	1	0.4

Table 1 shows the findings of demographic characteristics of the respondents and their spouses. A total of 278 respondents aged between 25 to 50 years old for respondents. 134 of respondents and couples were between 25-30 years old. In this study, 34.9% respondents have education at diploma level and 27.7% couple also have education at diploma level. There were 103 men, and 175 women in this study.

### **Instruments**

#### *Locus of control*

The Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance Scale (IPC; Levenson, 1973) comprises of 24 items designed to measure an individual's locus of control. Cronbach's alpha for each subscale was .834.

#### *Marital Satisfaction*

Marital satisfaction amongst the newlyweds was measured by using Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale developed by Schumm, Nichols, Schectman, & Grigsby (1983). KMSS is comprised of three items. Higher scores reflected greater marital satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for the scale was  $\alpha=0.984$ .

#### *Marital stability*

Marital stability was assessed using the Marital Instability Index developed by Booth, Johnson and Edwards (1983). Respondents were asked to respond to five questions about thoughts and discussion of marital separation or divorce. After reverse scores, high scores correspond to greater marital stability. A reliability coefficient was  $\alpha=0.747$ .

### Data analysis

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Path analysis was employed to assess relationships among the variables.

### Results

#### Relationship between Locus of control, marital satisfaction and marital stability.

**Table 2: Correlation between locus of control, marital satisfaction and marital stability**

Variable	Marital Satisfaction (r)	Marital Stability (r)
External locus of control	-.132*	-.100
Internal locus of control	-.010	.000

p<0.05\*

Result in table 2 indicated a negative significant relationship between external locus of control and marital satisfaction ( $r = -.132^*$ ,  $n=278$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). While, external locus of control has no significant correlation with marital stability ( $r = -.100$ ,  $n=278$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Besides, result found that internal locus of control has no significant relationship with marital satisfaction ( $r = -.010$ ,  $n=278$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) and marital stability ( $r = .000$ ,  $n=278$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ).

### Discussion and Conclusion

The present study investigated the relationship between external and internal locus of control and marital satisfaction. Also, current study investigated relationship between external and internal locus of control and marital stability.

The result of this study indicated that external locus of control has relationship with marital satisfaction but not internal locus of control. This may be because of high external locus of control person have more realistic expectations and accept the fact that it is beyond their control if anything happen to them as explained by Specht, Egloff, & Schmuckle, 2011 and Wortman, Sheedy, Gluhoski, & Kessler, 1992. For example, during recessions, people with a strong internal locus of control may feel difficult to accept adverse economic conditions. But, people with a strong external locus of control is more easier for them to accept adverse economic conditions (Strumpel et al., 1976).

This finding is contrary with other literature (Ganji & Navabinezhed, 2012; Judge & Bono, 2001; Doherty, 1981). They claimed that those who have external locus of control associated with high levels of marital dissatisfaction. Myers (1999) added that external locus of control person is high on negative tactics of resolving conflict, being less committed to the relationship and have lower levels of marital satisfaction. Camp and Ganong (1997) also proved in their study that spouses in satisfying marriages had a more internal locus of control compared with those in dissatisfying marriages.

Meanwhile, the result for this study shows that there is no relationship between internal locus of control with marital satisfaction and marital stability. Meaning that internal locus of control is not significantly contributed to satisfaction and stability of marriage in this study. This study is consistent with study by Mlott and Lira (1977) involving 44 couples proves that stable marriages did not differ from the unstable marriages on locus of control. According to Cobb-Clark & Schurer (2011) many important life events (e.g. death of a spouse, retirement, being a crime victim) appear to have no significant effect at all and their model explains very little of the variation in locus-of-control changes.

Contrary with Asgharianji, Vardanyan and Navabinejad (2015) which is their study is to examine the interrelationships among locus of control, sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction. Their finding indicated that there is a significant interrelationship between internal locus of control and sexual satisfaction with marital satisfaction. Pervin and John (1998) report that many studies show that the presence of internal locus of control has a high and positive correlation with marital satisfaction and compatibility.

Findings also found that there is no association between external locus of control and marital stability. Finding of current study show contrary than Mlott and Lira (1977) which in their study indicated that marriage instability is a result of external beliefs of locus of control. Besides that, Mlott and Lira (1977) explained that they did not find a correlation between locus of control and marital stability when the respondents were used as the unit of measure in their study. They did find that internal locus of control was not associated with stability in marriages among spouse.

Although the findings of current study is contradict with the previous literature, the result can be explained by looking at the nature of the respondents. All of the respondents are Muslims. Islam requires their believers to obey its main principles without question. This has created obedient and submissive rather than free and open-minded individuals with a capacity to criticise and control what is happening around them, also in society as a whole (Fatma Gül Cirhinlioğlua and Gözde Özdikmenli-Demirb, 2012). As a result, they might have the thinking and belief that they have no control over their life especially in finance.

## RECOMMENDATION

Although our study generated contradictory findings, it is still far from being a comprehensive study in such a complex field of research. The major issue which confines the scope of our research is the structure of our sample group. It is composed of only Malay Muslim government staff and this apparently decreases the possibility of making generalization of the results to other adult populations. Further studies should focus specifically on that issue and investigate those relationships in other young adult samples. Additionally our study is done in a quantitative perspective, future research that uses a qualitative perspective could discover the various social and psychological factors associated with young adults' intrinsic and extrinsic locus of control and marital satisfaction in detail.

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