



Relationship between Locus of Control, Desirability of Control and Obsessive-Compulsive symptomology

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Abstract

The current research investigated the relationship between locus of control, desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptomology among young adults in India. Drawing on a sample of 180 participants, the study employed Pearson correlation analysis to examine the associations between these variables. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between obsessive-compulsive symptomology and both desirability of control and external locus of control. The findings imply that individuals with higher levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms tend to exhibit a stronger desire for control over their circumstances and

a greater tendency to attribute outcomes to external factors. These results underscore the importance of considering cultural context in understanding and treating obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). By recognizing the influence of cultural beliefs and addressing underlying motivational impairments, clinicians can develop more effective interventions tailored to the needs of individuals in diverse cultural contexts, ultimately improving treatment outcomes and promoting better mental health.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Desirability of Control, Obsessive compulsive Symptomology, Young Adults*

Introduction

Cultural Context

In the context of India, where cultural beliefs and societal norms significantly influence mental health perceptions and behaviors, understanding the relationship between psychological constructs like Locus of Control (LOC), Desirability of Control, and Obsessive Compulsive Symptomology (OCS) takes on added significance. India boasts a rich tapestry of cultural traditions and spiritual practices that deeply influence the way individuals perceive and navigate their lives. Concepts such as karma, fate, and dharma shape the Indian worldview, often leading individuals to attribute life events to cosmic forces beyond their immediate control. This belief in a higher power or destiny can impact one's sense of agency and control over personal outcomes. Family dynamics play a pivotal role in Indian society, with close-knit familial bonds serving as the cornerstone of social support. However, these familial ties can also contribute to feelings of obligation and responsibility, particularly in the context of mental health. Individuals grappling with OCD symptoms may experience heightened pressure to conform to societal expectations of success and perfection, leading to feelings of inadequacy or loss of control. Moreover, mental health remains a topic shrouded in stigma and

misconceptions in many Indian communities. Traditional attitudes towards mental illness often view it as a sign of weakness or moral failing rather than a legitimate health concern. As a result, individuals experiencing OCD symptoms may face reluctance to seek professional help due to fear of social ostracization or family disapproval.

In light of these cultural nuances, research into the relationship between LOC, Desirability of Control, and OCS takes on heightened relevance in the Indian context. By exploring how cultural beliefs shape individuals' perceptions of control and influence the manifestation of OCD symptoms, researchers can develop more culturally sensitive approaches to understanding and treating the disorder. Culturally tailored interventions that take into account the role of family, community, and spirituality may be more effective in addressing OCD symptoms in India. By fostering greater awareness and acceptance of mental health issues, researchers can help reduce stigma and promote a more supportive environment for individuals seeking help. In conclusion, the cultural context of India profoundly shapes the way individuals perceive and experience OCD symptoms. By acknowledging and understanding these cultural nuances, researchers can develop more effective strategies for addressing the disorder and promoting mental well-being in Indian society.

Locus of Control

Locus of control delineates individuals' beliefs regarding their ability to influence outcomes in their lives. It distinguishes between internal control (attributing outcomes to personal actions) and external control (ascribing outcomes to external factors like chance or fate). This concept, rooted in expectancy theory, postulates that individuals internalize their locus of control, affecting their goal-directed behavior and success across various situations. High internal locus individuals feel a sense of responsibility and control, fostering higher self-

esteem, while high external locus individuals may exhibit learned helplessness, perceiving little control over their lives. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) individuals often exhibit an overdeveloped sense of personal responsibility and difficulty accepting uncertainties, reflecting a higher internal locus orientation.

Desirability of Control

Desirability of control denotes the extent to which individuals aspire to exert power over life events. Conceptualized as a stable trait influenced by past experiences and expectations, desirability of control significantly impacts coping strategies and overall adjustment. High desirability of control individuals demonstrate adaptive coping mechanisms, whereas low desirability of control individuals tend to experience helplessness and passivity in problem-solving.

Obsessive Compulsive Symptomology

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is characterized by anxiety-linked symptoms, affecting approximately 2-3% of the population. Symptoms include intrusive obsessions and repetitive compulsions aimed at alleviating distress. While sub-clinical levels of these symptoms are common, OCD can severely impair daily functioning, leading to educational underachievement, poor job prospects, and financial dependence. The disorder's causes remain unclear, with theories such as the diathesis-stress model suggesting a complex interplay of factors.

Review of Literature

The relationship between locus of control, desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptomology has been extensively explored in recent literature. Various studies have investigated different aspects of these constructs and their interplay with psychological symptoms, shedding light on the complex dynamics involved. Here is a synthesis of the key findings from the reviewed literature: Dağ and Şen (2018) examined the mediating role of perceived social support in the association between psychopathological symptoms and locus of control. They found that external locus of control and impersonal orientation were associated with negative effects on psychological symptomology, while internal locus of control and autonomy orientation showed beneficial effects. Perceived social support, particularly from friends, played a significant partial mediator role. Froreich et al. (2016) focused on the relationship between control and obsessive-compulsive symptomatology, highlighting the importance of feelings of ineffectiveness and fear of losing self-control as significant predictors of eating pathology and OCD symptoms. They suggested a common underlying fear of losing control among individuals with obsessive-compulsive behaviors and disordered eating.

Hu et al. (2023) explored the link between procrastination, anxiety, self-control, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms among Chinese college students. They found that procrastination and anxiety mediated the influence of self-control on obsessive-compulsive symptoms, indicating that self-control may adversely predict OCD symptoms. Fineberg et al. empirically tested control estimation in OCD patients using an illusion of control paradigm, revealing that OCD patients endorse lower estimates of control compared to healthy controls. This suggests a potential role for contingency learning in the disorder. Vassiliou (2015) investigated the connections between OCD symptoms, religion, and illusory sense of control, finding a correlation between OCD symptoms, increased illusory sense of control, and religious

beliefs. This highlights the importance of mental control in OCD and the potential role of religious ties in maintaining OCD behavior.

Cheng (2013) conducted a meta-analysis examining the relationship between locus of control and psychological symptoms across different cultures. They found significant correlations between external locus of control and anxiety and depressive symptoms, with variations across individualist and collectivist societies. Muhetaer et al. (2023) examined factors impacting obsessive-compulsive symptoms among college students, highlighting the mediating roles of procrastination and anxiety, as well as the direct negative predictive effect of self-control on OCD symptoms. Gelfand (2023) investigated the role of perceived control and its components in OCD, revealing that OCD-related beliefs and external locus of control orientations influence OCD symptoms. They also found that modifying certain control beliefs impacted cleaning behavior in OCD patients. Akbarikia et al. (2012) explored the relationship between OCD symptoms and locus of control, finding that higher locus of control levels, indicating strong others and chance, were associated with obsessive-compulsive symptoms.

Flahi et al. (2018) examined parenting practices, locus of control, and social support as predictors of OCD, but found no significant correlations, suggesting that additional variables may need to be considered in OCD research. Sandstrom (2024) conducted a review study summarizing the connection between control beliefs and OCD symptoms, suggesting that specific control beliefs may be more strongly linked to OCD than others. These studies collectively contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between locus of control, desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptomology, highlighting the importance of factors such as perceived social support, procrastination, anxiety, and cognitive beliefs in OCD development and maintenance. Further research is needed to explore the underlying mechanisms and potential interventions targeting these factors in OCD treatment.

Methodology

Purpose of the Present Study

The study's goal is multifaceted: to get a better understanding of the complex interplay between locus of control (LOC), desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptomology (OCS), which has important implications for both research and therapeutic treatment.

First, the study aims to provide insight on the link between LOC and OCS, specifically how individuals' perceptions about their power to affect outcomes in their life correspond with the emergence of obsessive-compulsive symptoms. The study's goal is to explore potential psychological mechanisms behind the condition by investigating whether persons with OCD display unique locus of control patterns when compared to non-clinical groups. Understanding how perceptions of control influence the development and maintenance of OCD symptoms might help guide targeted therapies aimed at changing maladaptive attitudes and behaviours.

Second, the study is to investigate the function of demand for control in the setting of OCD. The investigation can determine if the severity and character of obsessive-compulsive symptoms are influenced by the extent to which persons with OCD strive to exercise authority over life occurrences. This element of the research has the potential to improve our knowledge of the motivational mechanisms driving OCD behaviours, as well as to guide therapies targeted at resolving underlying motivational impairments. Furthermore, the study seeks to investigate the reciprocal effect of LOC, desirability of control, and OCS. The study's goal is to explain the dynamic processes that underpin the maintenance and worsening of OCD symptoms by investigating how these factors interact over time. Understanding these reciprocal interactions might help create targeted therapies that break negative feedback loops and promote adaptive coping techniques.

Overall, the study's goal is to improve our knowledge of the psychological mechanisms that underpin OCD and influence the development of more effective therapies for those suffering from the illness. By explaining the intricate interplay between locus of control, need for control, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms, the study has the potential to improve outcomes for OCD patients and increase the efficacy of treatment therapies.

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant relationship between locus of control and obsessive-compulsive symptomology of an individual.
- Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant relationship between desirability of control and obsessive-compulsive symptomology of an individual.
- Hypothesis 3: There will be significant relationship between locus of control and desirability of control in an individual.

Sample

Simple random sampling was used to collect the data. The sample consisted of young adults belonging to the age group between 18 to 25 years of age. Both offline and online close-ended questionnaire surveys were circulated to gather the information. Individuals of Indian origin was included in the inclusion criteria. Prior to their participation in the study, the participant's confidentiality was taken into consideration, and their consent was obtained. The sample comprised of 180 young adults, 80 males and 100 females.

Instruments

- ***Rotter's Locus of Control Scale***

Rotter's Locus of Control Scale is a widely used tool for assessing individuals' perceptions of their control over life outcomes. It distinguishes between internal locus of control (belief in personal agency) and external locus of control (attributing outcomes to external forces). This scale provides valuable insights into individuals' sense of control and agency, crucial for understanding various psychological phenomena. The scale demonstrates good reliability, with split-half reliability coefficients ranging from 0.65 to 0.79 and test-retest reliability coefficients of 0.67 to 0.73 over six weeks. Additionally, it exhibits good discriminant validity, effectively distinguishing between individuals with different orientations towards control.

- ***Burger's Desirability of Control Scale***

Burger's Desirability of Control Scale measures individuals' desire for control across different life domains. It assesses preferences for control in decision-making, problem-solving, and goal achievement. Low scores suggest a preference for relinquishing control, while high scores indicate a strong need for control, offering insights into motivational tendencies and autonomy needs. The scale demonstrates significant internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.80$) and test-retest reliability ($r = 0.75$), along with discriminant validity from measures of locus of control and social desirability. Validation procedures throughout its development ensure robust psychometric properties.

- ***The Revised Obsessive Compulsive Inventory (OCI-R)***

The OCI-R is a self-report tool used to assess the severity of obsessive-compulsive symptoms. It comprises eighteen items across six dimensions, providing a

comprehensive evaluation of symptomatology. The scale is valuable for diagnosing OCD, monitoring treatment progress, and understanding symptom severity. Foa et al. (1998) demonstrated good to excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.59-0.96$) and test-retest reliability ($r = 0.77-0.97$) over a two-week period. The scale exhibits strong discriminant validity across diagnostic categories and satisfactory convergent validity with other OCD measures, establishing its reliability and validity across diverse demographic and cultural contexts.

Design

Objectives and hypotheses were established by understanding the research gaps in both the previous and current literature present, through an extensive literature assessment. The current study follows a quantitative research design to evaluate and assess the relationship between locus of control, desirability of control and obsessive-compulsive symptomatology among Indian young adults. Simple random sampling was employed for sample collection. An offline and online close-ended survey form, consisting of items related to various demographic details and the tools to measure the variables, was generated. They were circulated among college students and young adults who fulfilled the inclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria for the sample in accordance with the research objective are: (i) the participants had to be between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and (ii) an Indian citizen. The inferential and descriptive statistics analysis of the obtained quantitative data were done using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0.0.0 through Pearson Correlation. Pearson Correlation was used to know if there is any significant relationship between any of the variables and if any, then its nature. Throughout the research, ethical standards such as obtaining informed consent and securing ethical clearance would be prioritized.

Result

On the sample (n=180, 80 males, 100 females), Pearson Correlation have been implemented to decipher the relationship among locus of control, desirability of control and obsessive-compulsive symptomology among Indian young adults

Table 1

Summarized table for total number of participants, mean and standard deviation of all responses for all different tools

	N	Mean	SD
Obsessive compulsive symptomology	180	48.42	13.556
Locus of control	180	13.66	3.851
Desirability of control	180	94.37	19.541

N= Total number of participants; SD= Standard Deviation.

Table 2

Pearson correlations results for all the variables- locus of control, desirability of control and obsessive-compulsive symptomology

Correlations				
		ocir	doc	loc
ocir	Pearson Correlation	1	.431**	.414**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000

	N	180	180	180
doc	Pearson Correlation	.431**	1	.491**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	180	180	180
loc	Pearson Correlation	.414**	.491**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	180	180	180

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.431$) between OCIR and DOC. This suggests that as obsessive-compulsive symptomology increases, so does the desirability of control. In other words, individuals with higher levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms tend to have a stronger desire for control over their circumstances.
- There is a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.414$) between OCIR and LOC. This indicates that as obsessive-compulsive symptomology increases, so does the external locus of control of an individual.
- There is a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.491$) between DOC and LOC. This suggests that as the desirability of control increases, so does the external locus of control.

Discussion

The results of the study shed light on the intricate relationship between locus of control (LOC), desirability of control (DOC), and obsessive-compulsive symptomology (OCS) among Indian

young adults. The findings offer valuable insights into how these psychological constructs interact and influence one another within the cultural context of India.

Firstly, the study found a significant positive correlation between obsessive-compulsive symptomology and desirability of control ($r = 0.431$, $p < 0.01$). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of obsessive-compulsive symptoms tend to exhibit a stronger desire for control over their circumstances. This finding aligns with previous research suggesting that individuals with OCD may attempt to exert control as a coping mechanism to manage their anxiety and alleviate distress. In the Indian cultural context, where societal pressures and expectations can contribute to feelings of inadequacy or loss of control, the desire for control may be heightened among individuals experiencing OCD symptoms.

Secondly, the study revealed a significant positive correlation between obsessive-compulsive symptomology and external locus of control ($r = 0.414$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as obsessive-compulsive symptoms increase, individuals may be more likely to attribute outcomes to external factors beyond their control, such as fate or luck. This finding is consistent with previous research indicating that individuals with OCD may perceive themselves as having limited control over their lives, leading to feelings of helplessness and uncertainty. In the Indian cultural context, where beliefs in karma and destiny often shape individuals' perceptions of control, individuals with OCD may struggle to reconcile their symptoms with cultural norms that emphasize personal responsibility and agency.

Thirdly, the study found a significant positive correlation between desirability of control and external locus of control ($r = 0.491$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that as the desire for control increases, individuals may be more inclined to perceive outcomes as being influenced by external factors rather than their own actions. This finding underscores the complex interplay between motivational tendencies and perceptions of control, highlighting the importance of understanding how individual differences in desire for control may shape beliefs

about personal agency and responsibility. In the Indian cultural context, where notions of fate and divine intervention often coexist with aspirations for personal achievement and success, individuals may navigate a delicate balance between seeking control over their lives and accepting the influence of external forces.

Overall, the results of the study contribute to our understanding of how cultural beliefs and societal norms shape individuals' perceptions of control and influence the manifestation of obsessive-compulsive symptoms. By elucidating the complex relationship between locus of control, desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptomology, the study provides valuable insights that can inform culturally sensitive approaches to understanding and treating OCD in the Indian context. Recognizing the cultural nuances that influence individuals' experiences of OCD is crucial for developing effective interventions that address the unique needs and challenges faced by individuals within diverse cultural settings. By acknowledging and addressing these cultural factors, researchers and clinicians can work towards promoting greater awareness, acceptance, and support for individuals living with OCD in India and beyond.

Future Implications

The study's findings have significant implications for future research and clinical practice. First, they emphasise the importance of culturally sensitive approaches to diagnosing and treating obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) in varied cultural contexts, such as India. Clinicians can adjust therapies to better suit the requirements of patients from various cultural backgrounds by acknowledging the impact of cultural beliefs and societal norms on individuals' sense of control and coping methods. Furthermore, the study emphasises the necessity of treating motivational inclinations and feelings of control during OCD treatment. Future research could investigate the efficacy of interventions that target these aspects to

enhance outcomes for people with OCD. By integrating cultural factors and addressing underlying motivational deficits, doctors can improve the effectiveness of OCD therapy and improve mental health outcomes for patients worldwide.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds insight on the complex relationship between locus of control, desirability of control, and obsessive-compulsive symptoms among young adults in India. The findings highlight the importance of cultural environment in influencing people's beliefs of control and coping techniques. Recognising the importance of cultural beliefs and societal norms allows doctors to develop better targeted and successful interventions for obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) in a variety of cultural settings. Furthermore, the study emphasises the necessity of addressing motivational inclinations and perceived control in OCD treatment. Future research could look into the effectiveness of interventions addressing these parameters to improve treatment outcomes. Overall, by incorporating cultural concerns and addressing underlying motivational deficits, physicians can increase the effectiveness of OCD therapy and promote better mental health outcomes for patients in India and globally.

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