Chronic Stress in Relation to Locus of Control

Kendra M. Clark¹, Miranda N. Jany¹, & Carissa L. Philippi¹
¹Department of Psychological Sciences, University of Missouri – St. Louis

Introduction

• Previous studies have mixed results about the relationship between locus of control (LOC) different types of stress.
  • External LOC, which is the belief that an individual’s life events are influenced by an outside force, is linked to more stress.¹,²,³,⁴
  • Internal LOC, which is the belief that an individual’s life events are due to their own behavior, is linked to more stress.⁵,⁶
  • No relationship between LOC and stress.⁷
  • The current study aims to examine the relationship between LOC and chronic stress

Hypothesis

Those with a more external LOC will experience more chronic stress than those with an internal LOC

Method

• 81 Participants (M.age: 30.09; 20 males) from the University of Missouri – St. Louis were recruited as a part of a larger study.
  • Online measures included:
    • Locus of Control Scale⁸: A 29-item questionnaire used to assess whether an individual has a more internal or external locus of control [Table 1]
    • Higher scores indicate more external LOC. Lower scores indicate more internal LOC
    • Life Stressors Checklist (LSC-R)⁹: A 30-item questionnaire that measures exposures to chronic and traumatic stress [Table 2]

Discussion

• Results were aligned with one of the previous studies, but not the others.¹,²,³,⁴,⁵,⁶
  • Findings imply that there is not a significant relationship between LOC and chronic stress
  • Future research can examine if an individual’s coping style in response to stress is a more important factor when paired with LOC type

Limitations

• Experimental measures used
  • Trait LOC was measured, which may not be a strong predictor of chronic stress

Future Studies

• Conduct a cohort longitudinal study
• Examine the relationship between state LOC and chronic stress

Hypothesis

Those with a more external LOC will experience more chronic stress than those with an internal LOC

Table 1: LOC scale sample question

| a. Many of the unhappy things in people’s lives are partly due to bad luck (external) |
| b. People’s misfortunes result from the mistakes they make (internal) |

Table 2: LSC-R sample question

1. Have you ever been in a serious disaster (for example, an earthquake, hurricane, large fire, explosion)?

References