The Effects of Culture and Religion On the Locus of Control and Psychological Well-being Relationship

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BACKGROUND

• This research is examining the effect culture and religious identification has on one’s view of the world, hereto after referred to as locus of control, which is known to affect levels of stress, depression, and self-esteem (Eid & Diener, 1999).
• The scientific community uses the term locus of control to refer to the extent to which an individual determines outcomes are the result of one’s own actions or the action of external forces (Rotter, 1966).
• Internal locus of control is belief that one’s own actions control an outcome.
• External locus of control is belief that external forces control an outcome.
• The United States, a country that scores high in internal locus of control, has a low external locus of control which will be negatively correlated to psychological well-being (Eid & Diener, 1999).

HYPOTHESES

1. External locus of control will be negatively correlated to psychological well-being for both individualistic and collectivistic identifiers; however, individualists will have a stronger negative correlation in comparison.
2. Those who affiliate with a religion will lessen external locus of control’s negative relationship to psychological well-being when compared to non-religious identifiers.
3. Internal locus of control will be higher in individualistic identifiers and non-religious identifiers, but will not predict any variance in psychological well-being.

METHOD

• Participants were 150 undergraduate students from Eastern Kentucky University. Of the 150 students, 31 were male, 119 female. Each student received credit towards course completion by answering survey questions in an online data collection system.
• The survey consisted of 127 questions answered on a 5-point Likert scale. Questions covered locus of control, stress, depression, self-esteem, culture identity, and demographics such as age, gender, and religious affiliation.

Survey Question Examples

Locus of Control (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree)
"In my case, getting what I want has little or nothing to do with luck."
"I feel that I have little influence over the things that happen to me."
Stress (1=strongly disagree, 5=very often)
"I felt that everything I did was an effort.
Depression (1=never, 5=very often)
"I wish I could have more respect for myself.
Self-esteem (1=never, 5=very often)
"I felt that things were going your way/"
Culture Identity (1=never, 5=very often)
"I see myself as my own person."

RESULTS

Using linear regression analyses, internal locus of control (Figure 1) positively predicted self-esteem (β = .238, p < .01), and negatively predicted depression (β = - .199, p < .01) and stress (β = -.222, p < .01).

External locus of control (Figure 2) positively predicted depression (β = -.347, p < .000) and stress (β = .433, p < .000), and negatively predicted self-esteem (β = -.353, p < .000).

Individualism (Figure 3) positively predicted internal locus of control (β = .271, p < .001), but did not predict external locus of control (β = .238, n.s.)

Collectivism (Figure 4) did not predict any variance in internal locus of control (β = .020, n.s.) or external locus of control (β = .161, n.s.)

Using a bivariate correlation analysis (Figure 5), it appears that those who identify as atheist or agnostic are more likely to express symptoms of high depression (r = .512, p < .05) and low self-esteem (r = -.499, p < .05).

Religious identifiers, in this case Christians, when compared to atheists and agnostics, expressed lower levels of depression (r = -.291, p < .01) and higher levels of self-esteem (r = -.316, p < .01).

REFERENCES


DISCUSSION

• With external and internal locus of control each predicting unique variance for psychological well-being, this study further confirms that locus of control should be measured as a two-factor construct and not across a single continuum.
• Individualism and collectivism did not significantly affect the relationship between internal or external locus of control and psychological well-being. This may be due to the somewhat lower participant count (N=150) or cultural influence may not be completely explained by this model.
• Having a religious affiliation was found to lessen some of the negative relationship between external locus of control and psychological well-being. This seems to imply that religious affiliation allows one to view external forces as necessary or less of a hindrance on well-being.

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