

The Relationship Between Attachment Styles and Locus of Control Among Psychiatric Nursing Students: Understanding Psychological Well-being

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ABSTRACT

A descriptive quantitative study design conducted to identify Relationship of Attachment styles and Locus of control so that the research uses non-probability (convenience sampling) of 205 students from the University of Kerbala. It contains three sections. First, the sociodemographic data consisting of (5) items which include age, gender, residence, marital status and the stage. Second, Attachment styles measure scale this part consists of 27 items. Third, Locus of Control measure scale consists of 58 items, 29 items for internal locus of control and 29 items for external locus of control. The results: According to the data analysis of the study, only secure attachment style has a relationship with internal/external locus of control among study subject. In addition, we reached the result that there is no relation between (avoidant, anxious/ambivalent) attachment style and locus of control among study subject. Conclusions: According to the present study finding, only secure attachment style has a relationship with internal/external locus of control among study subject. In addition, the study reached the result that there is no relation between (avoidant, anxious/ambivalent) attachment style and locus of control among study subject. This may relate to culture differences or child rearing in each society. Therefore, it can be said that, the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control is shaped based on people's knowledge of the environment and situation. It depends on the acquired self-esteem, anxiety, depression, socioeconomic status, age, culture, beliefs, religion, the meaning, motive and life purpose each person had, and helplessness and the degree of an individual's responsibility, all these factors effecting of how could individuals' belief of controllability over what happens to them in life

Keywords: Attachment Styles, Locus of Control, Psychological Well-being

INTRODUCTION

The psychological well-being of nursing students is a crucial aspect of their academic and professional development. As future caregivers, they will be responsible for providing emotional support and care to patients, which requires a high level of emotional intelligence and resilience. However, the intensive strain put upon their sense organs during studies as nurses affects both body and mind in such painful ways as nervousness, neurasthenia, melancholy or temporary breakdowns, etc. To better understand the factors that contribute to students' psychological well-being, this study aims to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control among psychiatric nursing students¹.

Attachment theory, developed by Bowlby and Ainsworth, posits that individuals develop attachment styles based on their early relationships with caregivers, which influence their relationships and coping mechanisms later in life². Attachment styles can be broadly categorized into secure, anxious, avoidant, and disorganized-disoriented³. Securely attached individuals tend to have better emotional regulation, social skills, and coping mechanisms, whereas insecurely attached individuals may exhibit anxiety, fear, or avoidance in relationships⁴. Locus of control, on the other hand, refers to an individual's perception of control over their environment and life events⁵. Individuals with

an internal locus of control believe that they have control over their lives, whereas those with an external locus of control attribute events to external factors, such as chance or fate⁶.

Research has shown that attachment styles and locus of control are closely linked to psychological well-being. For instance, a study found that securely attached individuals had better mental health outcomes⁷, including lower levels of anxiety and depression⁸. Another study has shown in their research on the perception of fairness by employees that those who have an internally oriented self-concept report greater work satisfaction and psychological health⁹. However, there is a dearth of research on the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control among psychiatric nursing students, a population that is particularly vulnerable to stress and burnout.

The value of these studies can be found by looking at their impact on the mental health of future nurses. By examining the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control, this study can identify potential risk factors for psychological distress and inform the development of targeted interventions to promote students' mental health and resilience. Furthermore, this study can contribute to the broader literature on attachment theory and locus of control, highlighting the importance of these concepts for understanding human behaviour and well-being.

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Attachment Styles and Psychological Well-being

Attachment theory posits those early relationships with caregiver's shape individuals' emotional and social development, impacting their psychological well-being and mental health. This article reviews existing empirical studies on this topic in order to present relevant results for current discussion purposes as far as possible, but also make clear where limits exist due to small numbers or contradictory results¹⁰.

The Effect of Economic Distress on Adolescence.

One study investigated the effects of social deprivation on adolescent development and mental health. The study showed how little social contact affects adolescents' psychological state, underlined the significance of personal relations in terms of welfare. However, the impact of attachment styles on these outcomes was not directly addressed, indicating a knowledge gap in this area. Future research should explore the mediating role of attachment styles in the relationship between social deprivation and mental health among adolescents¹¹.

Digital Mental Health Interventions for College Students

The systematic review from (2020) to (2021), conducted jointly with the authors mentioned above, takes up this question as well. The study highlighted the potential of these interventions but called for more rigorous research to ascertain their effective elements. While the study did not directly address attachment styles, future research could investigate how attachment styles influence the efficacy of digital mental health interventions, particularly among college students with different attachment patterns¹².

Maternal Mental Health During COVID-19

One study explored the impact of COVID-19 on maternal mental health, highlighting the challenges faced by mothers during the pandemic. The study underscored the need to address maternal mental health, pointing to potential intergenerational effects on attachment relationships. Future studies will show what there is about this relationship between mother's psychic state, attachment style and children under psych hygiene - taking into account possible propagation processes over several generations as well as the influence of earliest care experiences for the development of attachment behaviour¹³.

Economic Uncertainty and Mental Health During COVID-19

One study examined the effects of economic uncertainty on mental health in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study proposed a model linking social identity disturbance, job uncertainty, and psychological well-being. While the study did not directly address attachment styles, future research could explore the interplay between economic stressors, attachment patterns, and mental health outcomes, shedding light on how attachment processes may influence individuals' resilience in the face of economic challenges¹⁴.

In conclusion, the literature review provided insights into the relationship between attachment styles and psychological well-being, highlighting the need for further research to address knowledge gaps. Future studies should investigate the mediating role of attachment styles in the context of social deprivation, digital mental health interventions, pandemics, maternal mental health, and economic uncertainty, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of how attachment processes shape individuals' psychological well-being and mental health outcomes.

Locus of Control

The locus of control as a characteristic feature gains considerable attention in more current studies on business behaviour. The trait's impact on various aspects of individuals' lives and behaviour has been

explored, leading to a deeper understanding of its implications. One study found locus of control to be a crucial determinant for venture creation among young students in Romania. This insight indicates that individuals with a specific locus of control orientation are more inclined towards entrepreneurial activities, highlighting its importance in shaping entrepreneurial intentions among young individuals¹⁵. One study for instance, looked at locus of control as a mediating variable when examining the effects of psychological empowerment on work achievement. This study emphasizes the role of locus of control in the workplace, suggesting that it can influence employees' performance under certain conditions, further underscoring its relevance in occupational settings¹⁰.

Furthermore, Locus of control has been found by several researchers such as Li Chengzhi from China who researched on Entrepreneurship Intention of future University Students in India¹⁵. This finding extends the understanding of the trait's association with entrepreneurial intentions across diverse cultural and geographical contexts, emphasizing its universal significance. Biswas and Varma, in another study from India in 2019, came up against a correlation between LOC and the components within embodiment. This research has provided important findings regarding the association of locus of control with body awareness, showing how it can be relevant for understanding one's experience within VR environments. The following chapter will provide insight into these issues. First, while some studies have explored the trait's influence on entrepreneurial intentions among students in specific countries, there is a need for cross-cultural comparative research to understand how locus of control operates in different cultural contexts.

Second, the relationship between locus of control and excessive use of social media platforms, as observed among college students in China (unavailable source), calls for further investigation to understand the underlying mechanisms and potential implications on mental health and well-being.

Lastly, the role of locus of control in professionals' compassion fatigue and its implications in healthcare settings requires additional exploration to inform interventions and support systems. In conclusion, locus of control has emerged as a significant personality trait with wide-ranging implications, particularly in the domains of entrepreneurship, workplace performance, and embodiment¹⁵. Future research should address the identified knowledge gaps to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted influence of locus of control on individuals' behaviours and outcomes.

Internal locus of control:

Internal locus of control is a personality construct that refers to the extent to which individuals believe they have control over the events that influence their lives. This concept has been the subject of extensive research in various fields, including psychology, management, and sociology. Several studies have investigated the relationship between internal locus of control and different aspects of individual and organizational behaviour, shedding light on its role as a crucial determinant of attitudes and outcomes.

One study found that high scores on authoritarianism, dogmatism, and internal locus of control are related to a tough, punitive stance toward crime. This suggests that individuals with an internal locus of control may be more inclined to adopt strict and authoritarian attitudes, particularly in the context of criminal justice and law enforcement. Such findings indicate the potential influence of internal locus of control on ideological and personality factors, highlighting the need for further exploration of its implications in social and legal domains¹⁶.

One study found "general self-efficacy" and "internal locus of control" as moderating variables in relations between supervisory support and innovative behaviour¹⁷. This shows how important it may be to consider interactions between aspects such as the locus of control of rewards within the psychology of personality when attempting to understand their consequences for personal attitudes at work or behaviour thereat. The mediating role of internal locus of control in the relationship between supervisor support and innovative behaviour was also highlighted by another study¹⁸, also confirmed that there is such an intermediate effect. The results suggest the possible limitations in the causal link between the two variables, as well as their interaction process being more complex than initially expected, which warrants further scrutiny.

Moreover, Baumeister and Breuer (1967) have found out that inner directedness in children depends on their parents' communications. This indicates that individual differences in locus of control may have implications for family dynamics and communication patterns, highlighting the relevance of considering interpersonal and familial factors in understanding the impact of internal locus of control.

A person with good self-esteem would feel superior in comparison to these people less worthy because he's sick or suffering from old age. One study found that internal locus of control is mildly correlated with step count among Saudi women, suggesting a potential association between internal locus of control and physical activity¹⁸. These findings point to the relevance of considering the role of internal locus of control in promoting health-related behaviours and outcomes, highlighting its potential implications for public health interventions.

However, some studies have reported cultural differences in internal locus of control, finding that Chinese participants scored lower on internal locus of control than American participants¹⁸. This means there may be differences from one culture to another in regard to how much importance people place upon their own personal power or lack thereof—something that's worth investigating still more carefully by doing comparative studies among cultures around the world.

Despite extensive studies into the concept of inner determination, however, it still contains several blank spots which need filling. For instance, Eberly et al. (2011) proposed a dyadic theory of relational attributions, which may offer a novel perspective on understanding the interpersonal dynamics of internal locus of control within relational contexts. Additionally, the potential implications of internal locus of control for environmental attitudes and behaviours, remain an underexplored area that merits further investigation¹⁹.

External locus of control:

Individuals with an external locus of control believe that their behaviour is not the primary determinant of the outcomes they experience. Instead, they attribute the occurrence of reinforcement to factors beyond their control, such as luck, chance, or the influence of powerful others²⁰. This mindset can lead to a sense of powerlessness and exclusion, as individuals feel that their actions are not instrumental in achieving their goals. As a result, they may be less motivated to take personal responsibility for their behaviour, which can have negative consequences, such as increased antisocial behaviour and radicalization.

On top of everything else, people who have an outside locus of control do not want to adjust to circumstances when they get into trouble. This is because they do not believe that their actions are the primary source of reinforcement, and therefore, they do not see the need to modify their behaviour to achieve a different outcome²⁰. For example, if an

individual with an external locus of control experiences a positive outcome, they may attribute it to luck or the influence of a powerful other, rather than their own abilities or efforts. This can lead to a lack of personal growth and development, as they do not take credit for their achievements.

Research has also shown that individuals with an external locus of control can coexist with those who have an internal locus of control, resulting in a bi-local expectancy. This means that individuals can have a mix of internal and external expectancies in different situations, leading to a generalized expectancy that is bi-local. While this concept is not fully understood, it suggests that individuals can have both a sense of personal responsibility and a belief in the influence of external factors. However, there is no consensus among psychologists about which one should be regarded as healthier or preferable even if they agree that people who see themselves as having free will do better at accomplishing their own goals and developing good social relationships than those whose behaviour seems determined by outside forces²¹.

Attachment Styles and Communication in Nursing

Attachment styles have been identified as a crucial factor in influencing communication patterns²². Individuals with secure attachment styles tend to exhibit better communication skills, leading to positive relationships with others. The sort of people who feel relatively 'at home' (in terms of security) show greater ease at negotiating interpersonal situations than do less securely adapted persons. Nursing professionals who are aware of their attachment styles can use this knowledge to improve their communication strategies, ultimately enhancing patient care and overall job performance.

Locus of Control and Coping with Stress

The notion of "locus of control" is important for nurses too, especially when it comes to dealing with situations causing tension. Research has shown that individuals with an internal locus of control, who believe they have control over their circumstances, are better equipped to cope with stress²³. On the other hand, those with an external locus of control, who perceive their lives as being controlled by external factors, may struggle to manage stress effectively, leading to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. For nurses it's very important for them, but I'm thinking about my self-care too, if they understand what kind of person has which type or how much energy they have.

Implications for Therapeutic Relationships

In the context of nursing, attachment styles and locus of control can significantly influence the quality of therapeutic relationships. Nursing students who undergo educational interventions to develop communication skills with patients can benefit from a deeper understanding of attachment styles in order to establish rapport and trust with their patients²⁴. Educational measures aimed at improving communicative competences during nursing education also have benefits if one takes into account differentiation in terms of attachment styles so as not to miss out on possible therapeutic approaches⁶.

Knowledge Gaps and Future Research Directions

While existing research has shed light on the relevance of attachment styles and locus of control in the nursing profession, there are still knowledge gaps that warrant further investigation. For instance, it would be important to study the effect which individual types of attachment have upon nurses' interpersonal relations as well as upon their treatment of patients. Additionally, future research could focus on developing interventions tailored to nursing professionals that leverage attachment theory and locus of control to enhance communication

skills, stress management, and overall job performance. Furthermore, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine how attachment styles and locus of control evolve throughout a nurse's career and their implications for burnout, job satisfaction, and retention in the nursing workforce.

METHOD

Design of the study: Descriptive, correlational study design was conducted to find out the relationship between Attachment styles and Locus of control study subjects. The study was conducted for the period of 20 December 2020 to, 4 August 2021.

Administrative Arrangements: An official permit (Appendix A) was obtained from the presidency of The Karbala University to perform data collecting. Finally, agreement obtained from the student to participate in filling out the questionnaire electronically.

Setting of the study and sample: The study conducted at University of Karbala, collage of nursing, A random sample1 of 205 students from University College.

Data Collection: The data were collected through the utilization of structured Arabic version questionnaires and by mean of email and telegram technique with the subjects.

The Study Instrument: The researchers studied all relevant literature as well as research material on this subject to develop their own experimental instruments. A questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions in order to find out the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control study subjects. It consists of three main questionnaires as follows:

Questionnaires: The Questionnaires consist OF 3 parts. The part one of the study tools represent basic sociodemographic data consisting of (5) items which include Age, Gender, Stage, Place of Residence, Marital Status. The part two is Attachment style scale consists of 27 items measure that was created to assess the Attachment styles (secure, avoidant, ambivalent). Participants were instructed to indicate how true they felt each statement was of their life and response on scale of 1 (totally agree), 2 (agree), 3 (don't know), 4 (disagree), 5(totally disagree). The last part of the questionnaire is Locus of control scale consists of 58 items, 29 items for internal locus of control and 29 items for external locus of control. A measure that was created to assess the locus of control study subjects. Participants were instructed to indicate how true they felt each statement was their life and respond on a scale of 1 (True), 2 (False).

Validity of the questionnaire: Content validity for the early-developed instrument is determined through the use of the panel of expert (Appendix B) to investigate the clarity, relevance, and adequacy of the questionnaire in order to achieve the present study's objectives.

A provisional draft of the questionnaires was prepared for submission to ten specialists. They were faculty members from College of Nursing University of Kerbala, we're asked to review the questionnaire. Results indicated that the majority of experts had agreed that the questionnaire was appropriately designed and developed to find out the relationship between attachment styles and locus of control among study subjects. In addition to the expert's responses, their suggestions have taken into considerations. So far, modifications employed and the final copy of the constructed instrument is complete to be an appropriate tool for conducting this study.

Pilot study: The pilot study sample excluded from the original sample of the study. The purposes of the pilot study are:

1. To know whether respondents understand the questions and directions or if they find certain questions objectionable in some way.
2. To enhance the reliability of the questionnaire.
3. To calculate the mean duration spent in gathering information.

Reliability: The reliability check has been carried out by examining the correlation between responses in one part of the survey compared to another. This involved calculating the correlation between answers on different parts of a questionnaire.

Statistical data analysis: The data collected was entered into the computer to be analysis using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 25. The statistical procedures, which applied for the data analysis and assessment of the results, included the following:

Descriptive statistics: Statistical tables include frequencies (F), Percentages, Cumulative percent, mean scores (M.S), Correlation Factor analysis, were used to summarize the data.

Relative sufficiency (R.S): by three grades (low, moderate, and high).

Inferential statistics: Such analysis is Alpha Cronbach, Correlation between forms, to assess the questionnaire reliability according to the internal consistency.

RESULTS

This chapter represents data analysis of variables under the study to achieve the objectives of the study that related to assessing the attachment styles and locus of control types among undergraduate nursing students at University of Kerbela.

Table 1. Distribution of Students according to their Socio-demographic Characteristics

List	Characteristics	f	%
1	18 – 20 years	110	53.7
	21 – 23 years	95	46.3
	Total	205	100
	Male	55	26.8
2	Female	150	73.2
	Total	205	100
	Rural	63	30.7
3	Country	142	69.3
	Total	205	100
	Single	183	89.3
	Married	20	9.8
4	Divorced	1	0.5
	Widowed/ widower	1	0.5
	Total	205	100
	First	90	43.9
5	Second	64	31.2
	Third	30	14.6
	Fourth	21	10.2
	Total	205	100

f: Frequency, %: Percentage

This Table 1 shows that students are age group 18-20 years (53.7%), 73.2% are Females who are resident in a country (69.3%). 89.3% of them are seen singly and only 9.8% are married. Regarding scholastic stage, 43.9% of them are from the first stage, 31% are from the second stage, 14.6% are from the third stage, and 10.2% are from fourth stage.

Table 2. Association between Attachment Style and Internal locus of Control

Locus of control Attachment style	Internal Locus of control			Total	Chi-square
	Low	Moderate	High		
Ambivalent	Low	0	29	51	80
	Moderate	1	34	69	104
	High	0	6	15	21
Total		1	69	135	205
Avoidant	Low	0	17	34	51
	Moderate	1	50	96	143
	High	0	6	5	11
Total		1	69	135	205
Secure	Low	0	2	16	18
	Moderate	1	43	91	135
	High	0	24	28	52
Total		1	69	135	205

This Table 2 shows there is no significant association was found between attachment style and internal locus of control.

Table 3. Association between Attachment Style and External locus of Control

Internal Locus of control Attachment style	External Locus of control			Total	Chi-square
	Low	Moderate	High		
Ambivalent	Low	0	21	59	80
	Moderate	1	29	74	104
	High	0	4	17	21
Total		1	54	150	17
Avoidant	Low	0	14	37	51
	Moderate	1	37	105	143
	High	0	3	8	11
Total		1	54	150	205
Secure	Low	0	3	15	18
	Moderate	1	32	103	135
	High	0	19	32	52
Total		1	54	150	205

This Table 3 shows there is no significant association was found between attachment style and external locus of control.

Table 4. Correlation between Attachment Style and Locus of Control among students

Style	Locus of control	Pearson correlation		P-value	Significance
Ambivalent		0.102		0.146	N. S
Avoidant		0.042		0.549	N. S
Secure		0.241		0.001	H. S*

*Significant with internal and external locus of control

This Table 4 reveals that there is high significant correlation among internal and external locus of control with secure attachment style at p-value=0.001.

Table 5. Correlation between Types of Locus of Control and Sociodemographic Characteristics of students

Variables	Internal			External		
	Pearson correlation	P-value	Sig.	Pearson correlation	P-value	Sig.
Age	.089	.205	N. S	.288	.001	H. S
Gender	.029	.683	N. S	.093	.187	N. S
Residency	.049	.487	N. S	.077	.273	N. S
Marital status	.048	.494	N. S	.025	.722	N. S
Scholastic stage	.022	.754	N. S	.190	.006	S

This Table 5 indicates that there is a highly significant relationship between external locus of control with students' age at p-value =0.001 and there is a significant relationship between external locus of control and scholastic stage of the students at p-value= 0.006.

DISCUSSION

Relationship between attachment styles and locus of control:

However, the research did not find a significant relationship between attachment styles and internal versus external locus of control. This contradicts some of the past research showing a correlation between attachment styles and locus of control^{6,4}. This difference in results could be due to differences in the study samples or the measurement tools used. As analyzed by this research, is related to internal/external locus of control. Following this research, we found that there is no correlation between attachment style and internal locus of control and this contradicts the hypothesis of the research⁵.

Two psychological constructs that have been shown to be related in numerous ways are attachment styles and locus of control. According to¹⁶, attachment styles are the consistent thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that people exhibit in their intimate relationships, especially with their main caretakers while growing up. Locus of control, on the other hand, is a personality trait that reflects the extent to which individuals believe they have control over the events in their lives²⁵. Research has shown that individuals with secure attachment styles, who have experienced responsive and sensitive caregiving, tend to have an internal locus of control. They feel they can control their own lives and that what they do matters. On the other hand, those with insecure attachment styles (anxious-ambivalent or avoidant) are more likely to have an external locus of control. They probably feel like they have no control over their lives, that everything is just left up to luck or the whims of the more powerful ones²⁶.

There are some neat correlations between attachment styles and locus of control as found through research found that avoidant attachment styles are positively related to external locus of control, while secure attachment styles do not show a significant relationship with internal locus of control⁵. Also, one study found that people with different attachment styles react differently to control threats, those with an anxious attachment are more likely to choose market-exchange alternatives, while those with avoidant attachment styles are more likely to choose agentic⁶. Not only that, but Beesley and Stoltenberg (2002) also found that adult children of alcoholics show a greater need for control which in turn affects their relationship satisfaction⁸. All of these results combined underscore the complex relationship between attachment styles and the illusion of control, and how these elements affect a person's actions and relationships.

The current results agree with²⁷, Secure attachment style showed a highly significant correlation with both internal and external locus of control (p-value 0.001). That is, secure students are more likely to feel that they are in control of their own destinies. This may be because students with secure attachment styles have strong and supportive relationships with caregivers, which gives them a sense of security and self-confidence Bowlby, 1980).

Correlation between locus of control and sociodemographic characteristics of students.

The relationship between external locus of control and students' age has been explored in various studies. Studies have linked external locus of control with the unfavorable elements of academic and social development⁴. Also, according to some research done on depression among undergraduate students at the University of Botswana, internal locus of control, external locus of control, and age all together explained 31% of the variance in depression scores, meaning that a person's sense of control plays a significant role in the mental health of students²⁸. Also, the ability to turn off negative stimuli and feelings, which

correlates with resilience, is determined by the locus of control, where external people feel that their lives are manipulated by the outside world². All of these results underscore the necessity of investigating the role that external locus of control plays in student development and psychopathology over various age ranges.

The research determined that there is an extremely significant correlation between external locus of control and the age of the student (p-value 0.001) and a significant correlation with scholastic level (p-value 0.006). Therefore, it can be inferred that upper division students and those in advanced stages of their scholastic careers are more likely to feel that outside forces control their lives. This may be because older students and students in higher scholastic stages have more life experience, which may make them more aware of the factors they cannot²⁹.

CONCLUSION

The research on attachment styles and locus of control did not reveal any significant correlation between the two. This conflicts with some of the earlier research that has shown a correlation between attachment styles and a person's locus of control over their life events¹⁶. That gap in results could be due to a difference in samples or measuring instruments. As noted, the current study's analysis of the data did not reveal a relationship between attachment style and internal/external locus of control, contrary to the initial research hypothesis⁵. While attachment styles and locus of control are theoretically related psychological concepts, with secure attachment typically associated with an internal locus of control and insecure attachment linked to an external locus of control²⁶, the present study did not find empirical support for this connection. So, more research is probably needed to figure out exactly what type of relationship these two very significant constructs have to each other and what kind of variables may affect this relationship.

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