

Locus of Control and Military Leaders: Relevance and Implications

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Abstract

Locus of Control has a bearing on an individual's performance effectiveness and leadership. To enhance leadership effectiveness, foster resilience, and accomplish mission success, military commanders must comprehend the notion of LoC and be able to assess it in their subordinates. According to the paper, LoC refers to a person's perception of their level of influence over the things happening to them. The study is concerned with the many loci of control, from internal to external, and the effects of each type of LoC on military leadership. The study intends to show that an internal LoC, which is linked to a more proactive, self-directed, and adaptable leadership style, is more desired by military leaders

Keywords: Locus of Control, military leaders, leadership effectiveness, relevance, improving Locus of Control, assessment

Introduction

Locus of Control (LoC) is a concept that describes the conviction that one has control over the circumstances that shape their lives. LoC refers to an individual's beliefs about the extent to which their actions and outcomes are determined by internal or external factors. Individuals with internal LoC tend to believe that outcomes of their actions are determined by their own capabilities & efforts, while individuals with an external LoC to believe that the outcomes of their actions are determined by external factors such as luck, chance or fate. People with an internal LoC think they can control their own destiny, whereas those having external LoC think external forces like luck or fate determine whether they succeed or fail. According to research, those who having internal LoC are more adaptable and robust to the stresses of life. They also tend to be more proactive and motivated by themselves, both of which are crucial. The consequences for military leadership include the need for strong emotional intelligence and internal LoC in commanders. This will enable them to lead and manage their soldiers skilfully, forge solid bonds with their subordinates, and make wise choices in stressful situations. Military groups may also profit by offering training programs that aid people in enhancing their LoC. It's important to remember that a military situation differs from a civilian context. Additionally, compared to the general population, military leaders are frequently subjected to more stressful and traumatic events, therefore they might need particular interventions to meet their particular demands. Research has suggested that individuals having internal LoC may be more effective leaders than leaders with external LoC. For military leadership, the

idea of LoC is pertinent and crucial since it can influence a leader's capacity to form and lead successful teams, make wise judgments, and produce favourable results.

Aim

"To examine the impact of Locus of Control (LoC) on the decision-making, leadership style, stress management, and adaptability of military leaders, and to investigate the potential implications of these findings for the selection, training, and development of military leaders."

Literature Review

Panwar, Gorsy (2015), "Personal Effectiveness and LoC among military personnel", concluded that individuals in the defense who had internal LoC had higher personal effectiveness. Whereas individuals who are less effective in themselves acknowledge that success is influenced or determined by outside factors. Inter-correlations were calculated, stepwise multiple regression was used, and the results were analyzed in the context of the Indian military.

Duffy, Paul J. et.al (1978), in their paper, "Replication and Extension of Collins' LoC Scale" found that the Rotter I-E scale's factor structure resembled that of the original Rotter I-E scale, validating the widely held concept that behavioral loci of control are internal-external and multi-dimensional.

Constanta Dumitriu et.al (2014), in their paper, "The Influence of the LoC and Decision-making Capacity upon the Leadership Style", highlighted the influence of personality (decision-making ability, critical thinking, and LoC) on leadership style, with the reciprocal interaction between the leader and subordinate influencing both individual and organisational performance.

Gagan Jot Kaur & R. L. Zinta (2017) in their paper, "Appraisal of LoC among the Military Personnel of Peace and Field Areas", concluded that military personnel who operated in peacetime settings with low-intensity conflicts reported having a better sense of LoC than their counterparts in the field.

Locus Of Control

A person's perception of the degree to which their actions and results are influenced by internal or external influences is referred to as their Locus of Control, according to psychology. In 1954, Julian Rotter was the first to use the phrase. A person's perception of where control for the events that have an impact on their life comes from is considered as their LoC. It refers to whether people think they have an internal LoC over the things happening to them or that fate, chance or luck is in charge of their future (external LoC).

The spectrum of Locus of Control

The idea of LoC encompasses both internal and exterior loci of control. Individuals fall at various positions along the spectrum, with these two extremes serving as the two endpoints of the spectrum.

- Internal LoC: People having an internal LoC frequently feel in charge of their lives and that they have some control over how things turn out for them. They credit their own efforts for their accomplishments and take ownership of their mistakes.
- External LoC: People with an external LoC frequently think that fate or luck—or other uncontrollable factors—determine their fate. They place the responsibility for their successes and misfortunes on other causes.

- Between the two extremes of internal and external LoC are people with an intermediate LoC. Some outcomes can be attributed to own actions or internal variables, while others might be attributed to external factors.

Relevance for military leaders

The relevance of LoC for military leadership is that, military leaders are expected to have high level of internal LoC as they have to make quick decisions in high-stress situations, build and maintain effective teams, and inspire and lead others under difficult circumstances. Additionally, individuals having an internal LoC may be more resilient under stress and adverse situations, which is important for military leaders who are often exposed to high-stress situations. Furthermore, military leaders with an internal LoC may be more likely to take initiative and own the responsibility for their actions, which can be beneficial for leadership effectiveness.

Leaders with Internal Locus of Control

Leaders with an internal LoC often believe that their success is due to their own abilities and efforts, rather than external factors. They tend to be proactive, self-motivated, and confident in their decisions, leading to more effective and autonomous leadership styles. This mindset can also result in greater job satisfaction and improved team performance. Military leaders with high internal LoC are likely to achieve the following:

- **Effective decision-making:** Military leaders with an internal LoC tend to take responsibility for their actions and are more likely to be effective decision makers.
- **Strong leadership:** Military leaders who have a high internal LoC often have a positive outlook on life and are driven by a sense of purpose, which enables them to encourage and inspire their troops.
- **Better stress management:** Military leaders having high internal LoC are more likely to be able to control the outcome of high-stress situations.
- **Adaptability:** Military leaders with high internal LoC are more likely to be able to adjust to changes in the military environment because they feel in control of their own lives.
- **Strong relationships:** Due to their high emotional intelligence and ability to recognise, regulate, and understand both their own and others' emotions, military leaders with internal LoC frequently find it easy to manage strong relationships with the members of their teams.
- **Positive results:** Because they act to accomplish their objectives and think that their actions can affect the outcome, military leaders with higher internal LoC frequently have favorable results.
- **Self-motivation:** Military commanders who have a strong sense of self-control tend to be driven by their own ambitions, which makes them more proactive, persistent, and resilient.

Leaders with External Locus of Control

Leaders with an external LoC blame luck or the actions of others for their success or failure. This kind of thinking might result in a submissive leadership style, diminished job satisfaction, and a lack of accountability. Additionally, rather than accepting responsibility for their acts, these leaders may have the propensity to place the blame for their errors on others. For better leadership, it's critical for those having an external LoC to change their focus to internal variables. They could feel as though they have little control over their own choices and results and are at the whim of outside factors.

A leader who has an external LoC may have difficulties in the following areas:

- **Decision-making:** Instead of accepting accountability for their own actions and decisions, external leaders frequently place the blame for their errors on others or external circumstances.
- **Ineffectiveness:** Military leaders may struggle to make effective decisions, set clear goals and objectives, and achieve positive outcomes. They may also be less able to adapt to changing circumstances and make effective use of available resources.
- **Leadership:** Due to a possible lack of motivation and self-confidence, they may find it difficult to motivate and inspire others.
- **Poor team performance:** Low morale, poor communication, and a lack of cohesion among team members are all consequences of military leaders with a poor LoC. These leaders may find it difficult to motivate and inspire their troops.
- **Adapting to change:** Because they think that outside forces drive their actions and results, they could find it difficult to adjust to changes in the military environment.
- **Handling stress:** They may find it difficult to handle high-stress situations effectively, and they are more likely to blame external factors for their failures.
- **Relationship development and maintenance:** Due to their potentially limited capacity to comprehend and regulate their own emotions as well as those of others, they may find it difficult to develop and maintain healthy connections with their team members.
- **Positive results:** They might find it difficult to get positive results because they might be less able to act to accomplish their goals and might be more inclined to attribute failure to other forces.

The ability of military commanders to make wise decisions, motivate and lead people, manage stress, adjust to change, establish and maintain positive relationships, and produce positive results can all be seriously hampered by external LoC. Therefore, in order for military leaders to succeed in their positions, they must endeavour to enhance their LoC.

Improving one's Locus of Control

Adopting a growth mindset, setting realistic goals, accepting accountability, asking for feedback, and rephrasing unfavourable beliefs are all necessary for increasing LoC. Increasing self-awareness and creating a support system can also aid in the transition from external to internal control. Positivity influences more sensible choices to be made, which results in better results. Military commanders can enhance their LoC by implementing a number of different tactics, including:

- **Increase self-awareness:** Military commanders can strengthen their LoC by becoming more self-aware of their own thoughts and beliefs. This can be accomplished by periodically reflecting on their experiences and identifying any negative or restricting thoughts they may have.
- **Self-reflection:** By regularly reflecting on one's own thoughts, beliefs, and actions, military leaders can gain a better understanding of their own LoC and identify areas where they may need to make changes.
- **Personal development:** Military commanders can participate in activities such as training and education, mentorship programmes, and self-improvement workshops that promote personal growth and development..
- **Negative or restricting ideas can be challenged by military leaders by evaluating the facts for and against them.** This can assist them in shifting their perspective from an external LoC to an internal LoC.

- Setting SMART goals allows military leaders to concentrate on what they can control and take action to attain them.
- Accept responsibility for their activities: Military leaders can increase their LoC by accepting responsibility for their own acts and consequences and taking steps to learn from mistakes rather than blaming others.
- Empower Team members: Military commanders should empower their team members by allowing them to make decisions and conduct actions on their own. This will give them a greater sense of control and responsibility.
- Learning from mistakes: Instead of concentrating on previous failures, military commanders can learn from them and apply what they've learned to better their own performance and decision-making in the future.
- Self-regulation strategies such as meditation, deep breathing, mindfulness, and relaxation can help military leaders enhance their LoC. Such actions can help in the reduction of tension and anxiety, as well as the improvement of attention and concentration.
- Encourage resilience: Military commanders should be able to work under pressure by encouraging team members to remain positive and motivated when faced with an adversity.
- Positive thinking: Military commanders can develop positive thinking habits such as focusing on what they can control and reframing negative thoughts and situations into positive ones.
- Seek feedback from peers, subordinates, and superiors: Military leaders can benefit from soliciting feedback from their peers, subordinates, and superiors. This can assist them in identifying areas where they need to improve as well as learning from their triumphs.

Increasing one's internal centre of control takes time and effort. It won't happen immediately, but with constant work, military commanders may transform their perspective and increase their capacity to take control of their actions and consequences. It is pertinent to note that changing one's LoC can be a gradual process that takes time, therefore consistency and tenacity are essential in applying these tactics. Seeking advice and assistance from a mental health professional or a coach may also be valuable during this process.

Assessing Locus of Control : LoC assessment methods and tools

There are several self-report questionnaires and validated methodologies that are commonly used, but it is critical to examine the cultural, linguistic, and educational background of the population being assessed to ensure that the tool is appropriate that the results are valid and reliable. In addition, other methods, such as observation and interviews, should be used to gain a more comprehensive knowledge of an individual's LoC. There are numerous approaches for determining the LoC. A few of the popular instruments used are:-

1. Self-assessment questionnaires are the most prevalent tool for determining LoC. They often include statements like "I have control over the events that happen to me" and "What occurs to me is primarily determined by chance," and responses are frequently collected using a Likert-scale style. There are a number of tools and variants for assessing the LoC . Examples include:-

a. Rotter's Locus of Control Scale: This is the most widely used measure of locus of control. It consists of 29 items that ask individuals to rate their agreement with various statements about their beliefs regarding the control of events in their lives.

- b. The Multidimensional Health LoC (MHLC) Scale. It assesses an individual's opinions about their ability to influence their health. It has three sub-scales: internal, powerful others, and chance.
 - c. H Levenson's multidimensional 24-item scale, conceptualized as a broad expectancy to see reinforcement as contingent on one's own behaviors (internal control) or as the product of attention beyond one's control and owing to chance, fate, or powerful others (external control). This scale measures the extent to which individuals perceive control over their lives in different domains.
 - d. Parental Locus of Control Scale: This scale measures the extent to which parents believe they have control over their children's behavior.
 - e. The Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External LoC Scale for Adults: This scale is a self-report questionnaire that examines an individual's opinions about how much of their behaviors and outcomes are influenced by internal or external influences.
2. Behavioral observation: Observing an individual's conduct in various settings and noting their predisposition to attribute success or failure to internal or external sources is the basis for this strategy.
 3. Interviews: This method is interviewing a person and asking them about their ideas and attitudes on control and responsibility.
 4. Implicit measures are used to assess unconscious biases and attitudes toward internal and external control. Examples include the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and the Affective Misattribution Procedure (AMP).
 5. Self-Efficacy Scale: This scale measures a person's confidence in their own skills to complete a task or reach a goal. Self-efficacy is connected to internal LoC and may be used to assess LoC.

Suggestions for young military leaders to improve their locus of control:

- Develop a growth mindset: Embrace challenges and failures as opportunities for growth and learning. .
- Take responsibility for your actions: Recognize that you have control over your actions and decisions, and take responsibility for the outcomes that result from them. Avoid making excuses or blaming external factors for your failures.
- Focus on what you can control: Identify the things that are within your control and focus your efforts on those. Recognize that some things may be outside of your control, and let go of trying to change those things.
- Set goals and take action: Set clear, achievable goals and take action to achieve them. This can help you feel more in control of your life and more confident in your ability to achieve your objectives.
- Seek feedback: Seek feedback from others, including peers, subordinates, and superiors. This can help you gain a better understanding of how your actions and decisions impact others, and provide insight into areas where you can improve.
- Practice self-reflection: Regularly reflect on your actions and decisions to identify areas for improvement. This can help you develop a greater sense of self-awareness and improve your ability to make more effective decisions in the future.

Conclusion

The paper emphasized the significance of LoC in military leadership. According to the findings, military leaders who have an internal LoC are more effective in decision-making, leadership, stress management, and flexibility. These findings have major implications for military commander selection, training, and development. These findings imply that military leaders with a greater internal LoC may be better able to deal with the demands of the military environment. It is critical for military organisations to analyse potential leaders' LoC and to provide training and development opportunities that focus on enhancing internal LoC. Furthermore, future research should look into the potential moderating effects of other factors on the relationship between LoC and military leadership performance, such as emotional intelligence and situational factors.

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