



## Nigerian Employees' Study on Locus of Control and Subjective Well Being : North Eastern Context

### KEYWORDS

Nigeria, Locus of Control, Subjective Well Being, Employees, Private sector

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### ABSTRACT

*Human resources are the mainstay of today's business and understanding their personality through locus of control and subjective well being was the basic aim in the present study. Conducted among the employees of private sector concerns and banks in North Eastern part of Nigeria, understanding how much these workers blame external forces or maybe their own shortcomings and its effect on their sense of pleasure or happiness was underlying premise of the paper. Independent and demographic variables along with other factors were put to test in the study employing Cronbach's Alpha, Split Half Method, Simple regression, Pearson correlations (bivariate), K independent samples median test, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Levene Statistics, Welch and Brown-Forsythe test and associated methods like Tukey HSD and Games Howell test along with simple means, standard deviation and percentages were employed for the analysis of data for the research. A negative relationship between locus of control and subjective well-being, employees with more earnings having internal score, effect of gender on the constructs and many other key findings emerged as a result of the analysis of the data.*

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### 1. Introduction and Review of Literature:

According to Lefcourt (1976), locus of control (LOC) is a psychological, social learning theory that refers to the extent to which individuals perceive control over their lives, and environment. Rotter (1954) conceived the concept of LOC. He pointed that if an individual believes that he himself control his life he has internal locus and if he feels that decisions and life is controlled by environmental factors which they do not have power over it is termed as external. In other word LOC means the level to which a person perceives uncertainties, fate, luck or chance to affect results. In organizational context it is imperative to note that successful leaders are gifted with a high internal LOC; while their lesser counterparts are on lower side of internal LOC (Hiers & Heckel, 1977; Anderson & Schneier, 1978; McCullough et. al., 1994).

According to Gifford et al. (2006) internal LOC is associated with scholastic success along with lesser stress (Garber & Seligman, 1980), bigger levels of self-motivation and social maturity (Nelson & Mathias, 1995) and longer life span (Chipperfield, 1993). Additionally, in the view of Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet (1999) people having internal LOC display faith in their ability to achieve self-appointed objectives transforming their environment, as they perceive themselves liable to success of job and accountable if something goes wrong, feeling that there was insufficient partaking on their part. They view hard work key to positive outcomes (Carrim et al., 2006). In contrast, people with an external LOC believe that their own actions are dependent on factors outside their personal control (Landy & Contre, 2004; Martin, et. al., 2005), blaming outside forces for the consequences of behaviour (Connolly, 1980).

Many studies suggest that people high on internal LOC

have better interpersonal relationships with supervisors and coworkers as compared to externals (Lefcourt et al., 1985; Ringer & Boss, 2000). As recommended by Rotter, powerful others, luck or chance, fate, and a belief that the world is too complex to be predicted are the four types of beliefs in externals. People high on externals LOC are disinclined to change behaviour as they do not see it as a primary source for altering reinforcements (Marks, 1998).

Perceptual processes were found to be having an affect on LOC, according to Judge et al. (1998), work environment is positively identified by people with internal LOC while externals view it negatively. Thought controlling actions and its positive affect on beliefs, motivation and job performance was another construct given by Myers (1996) on internal LOC. Literature also finds that LOC possibly influence job performance and career success as internals are expected to set challenging goals and benchmarks for themselves, even if it incurs hardships (Yukl & Latham, 1978) and this according to Wofford et. al. (1992) leads to comparatively greater feat and career success for internals.

Coming to the second aspect of the present study, as put by Diener (1984), how an individual assesses his/her life is what by and large the idea of Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is. The concept comprises of the state that positive, cognitive and spiritual elements are part of one's existence mutually with the non-existence of negative factors. From absolute gloom to elation and total life satisfaction SWB encompasses on understanding the complete range of well-being. It does not measure temporary feelings of euphoria, pleasure, ecstasy or exhilaration, but long-term positive feelings of joy or happiness of individuals (Suh et. al., 1998). Emotional or affective component and the judgmental or cognitive component are the two major elements of SWB (Veenhoven, 1991), the latter also termed as life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976).

Further, pleasant and unpleasant emotions or effects make up SWB in a person's life and its satisfaction depends on former being greater than the latter. Additionally an individual's cognitive judgement being positive as regards to

his/her life also mean satisfaction with life (Tuzgol Dost, 2005).

LOC is found to be associated with all the three areas of SWB namely positive affect, negative affect and global life satisfaction (Emmons & Diener, 1985). Additionally studies suggest that people with higher levels of external locus of control reported more negative affect and lower levels of positive affect in their lives, while those having internal LOC reported higher levels of positive affect in their life (Zika & Chamberlin, 1987; Bostic & Ptacek, 2001). Additionally, Holder & Levi (1988) have pointed out that an external LOC expectancy has a positive correlation with higher levels of psychological distress.

Many studies propose that both internal and external LOC have a distinctive relationship to psychological well-being. The end result of a study done by Garber (1980) was that high internal LOC meant superior psychological well-being of the participants who further reported less stress and depression. On the other hand according to Garber & Seligman (1980) external LOC is linked with higher levels of stress, having a harmful effect on SWB. According to Grob (2000), external LOC leads to stress and a feeling of powerlessness for people. High internal LOC is also associated with positive effect on well being (Klonowicz, 2001).

Studies have also pointed to the fact that there is negative relationship between LOC and SWB (Kulshrestha & Sen, 2006). The link between LOC and employee well being explicates the difference between workers working in the same work setting having different work behavior (Hanisch & Hulin, 1991; Spector, 1982). Based on the review of the literature, the importance and objectives of the study at hand is discussed in the subsequent segment.

## 2. Significance and Objectives:

North Eastern part of Nigeria has been relatively deprived of its fair share of literature and researches particularly in the field of management and specifically human resource management and organizational behavior, the main reason for this being the adverse affect of insurgency on the businesses and general work environment in this part of the world. The study at hand aims to fill the gap existing within the current literature. This may facilitate more understanding of corporate world in the region and the companies and organizations can devise strategies to bring positive changes in relation to locus of control and subjective well being of the employees. The focus of the study is to identify and measure levels of locus of control and subjective well being among the private sector employees of the area in question. It also seeks to understand the correlation between the two concepts keeping in view various independent variables including demographic ones like gender.

## 3. Conceptual Framework of the Study:

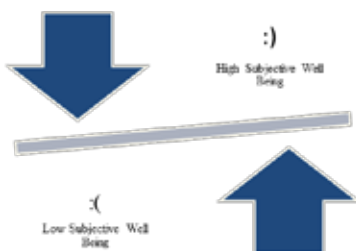


Figure1. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frame work of the present study is structured on the construct that external LOC would lead to low SWB while internal LOC means higher SWB among the participants of the study. SWB being an evaluation of a person's –who is also a worker- holistic judgement about his or her contentment with life, it is assumed that LOC would affect SWB which in turn determine an individual's performance at workplace. Thus the concepts of LOC, SWB and performance were conceptualized to have a inter connection, though the last notion (performance) was not the prime focus of the research at hand. Based on this platform the next section puts the hypotheses that were tested in the course of study.

## 4. Statement of Hypotheses:

Following null hypotheses based on the literature available and the conceptual model devised were tested in the study:

H<sub>0</sub> LOC, age income, work experience and education have no significant effect on SWB of the employees.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant relationship between LOC and SWB of employees working in private sector organizations in Nigeria.

H<sub>0</sub> LOC will not become more internal with increasing age.

H<sub>0</sub> Locus of control has no significant effect on income earned by employees.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference between married and single employees vis-à-vis subjective well being.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference between male and female employees working in banks and other private sector organizations vis-à-vis locus of control profile.

H<sub>0</sub> There is no significant difference between male and female employees working in banks and other private sector organizations vis-à-vis subjective well being profile.

H<sub>0</sub> Marital status of employees has no significant effect on LOC and SWB profile.

## 5. Methodology:

### 5.1. Design, Universe and Sample:

The present study was conducted with non-experimental, descriptive and quantitative research design in Damaturu and Potiskum Local Government Areas (LGA) which are in North Eastern part of Nigeria. These two towns were selected as the former is the capital of Yobe State, while the latter is commercial centre of the region (also one of the largest cattle markets in West Africa), both having industries, businesses and other commercial establishments. The area selected has been researched earlier also by the author, although the dimensions of the study were different; please refer to Abbas & Karage (2015).

Banks and other private concerns like computer maintenance firms, soft drinks bottling plants, flour mills, shoe manufacturing units, pouch water plants and various telecom companies were selected for the study drawing a sample size of 199 employees through convenience sampling method as the areas of data collection were altogether foreign country for the author. 56.3% were of the respondents were working in private banks while rest of the participant at 43.7% were in other private jobs already

mentioned. Employing any complex sampling method would have been cumbersome for the researcher not only as the country is unknown but also due to limitations of travel, funds, communicative language and above all due to security situation as a result of deadly militancy in the region, it was not advisable to move around and visit other towns and meet people for data collection purpose.

Majority of the participants were males (57.3%) while 42.7% were females. 25-30 years of age was representative of most of the employees at 47.7%, most of them having bachelors degree (70.9%) for education, having average work experience of 5.05 years. In larger part the income bracket of the employees surveyed was Naira 50000-100000(43.7%). Marital status shows that most of the respondents were married (54.3%).

**5.2. Statistical Tools:**

Cronbach's Alpha, Split Half Method, Simple Regression, Pearson Correlations (bivariate), K independent samples median test, One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Levene Statistics, Welch and Brown-Forsythe test and allied procedures of Tukey HSD and Games Howell test along with simple means, standard deviation and percentages were employed for the analysis of data for the research. Microsoft excel sheet and Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16 was employed for all the calculations.

**5.3. Instrumentation and Reliability:**

Rotter Internal-External Scale of Locus of Control was em-

ployed to measure LOC among the respondents (Rotter, 1966). In this 29-item questionnaire including the six filler questions (not scored), the respondents had to choose from the two option they had (forced choice), one characterizing internal LOC attitude and the other representing an attitude typical of external. External answers were scored, thereby meaning more the score; more was external locus of control. Widely used the validity of scale is very high and the reliability of the scale calculated through split half method was .62.

Subjective Well Being Scale having 7 point five Likert Type items given by Diener et al. (1985) was used to evaluate overall level of life satisfaction and happiness of participants of the study, summation of scores leading to total satisfaction score. The Cronbach's alpha value of .584 showed strong internal reliability of the five item scale.

**6. Hypotheses Testing and Results:**

**6.1. Regression Analysis of Selected Variables**

Analyzing table 1 it was established that SWB was effected by selected demographic variables as well as LOC score (with 95% confidence) as revealed by the regression analysis, the p-value being .001 which is less than .05. The value of R Square =0.098 further point to the fact that 9.8% of variation is SWB predictor variables of education, income, LOC score, age and work experience.

| Model   |            | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig.              | R Square |
|---|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|-------------------|----------|
| 1   | Regression | 16.846         | 5   | 3.369       | 4.204 | .001 <sup>a</sup> | .098     |
|   | Residual   | 154.682        | 193 | .801        |       |                   |          |
|   | Total      | 171.528        | 198 |             |       |                   |          |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), Education, Income, LOC Score, Age, Work Experience |            |                |     |             |       |                   |          |
| b. Dependent Variable: SWB MEAN   |            |                |     |             |       |                   |          |

Coefficients regression of .032 and .062 for the factors work experience and education respectively indicate positive effect of the variables on SWB, at the same time the result is not statistically significant. This thereby accepts the null hypothesis that these variables have no effect on SWB of the employees surveyed. Age shows coefficients regression .196 and it statistically establishes positive effect on SWB, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis for this factor. For LOC with coefficients regression -.020 and income (coefficients regression -.310) shows that these factors have significant effect on SWB which rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant effect of LOC and income on SWB of the employees.

**Table 2. Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

| Model                      | B               | Unstandardized Coefficients |      | Standardized Coefficients | t      | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval for B |             |
|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|------|---------------------------|--------|------|-------------------------------|-------------|
|                            |                 | Std. Error                  | Beta |                           |        |      | Lower Bound                   | Upper Bound |
| 1                          | (Constant)      | 4.732                       | .400 |                           | 11.829 | .000 | 3.943                         | 5.521       |
|                            | LOC Score       | -.020                       | .022 | -.062                     | -.894  | .043 | -.024                         | .063        |
|                            | Age             | .196                        | .091 | .152                      | 2.160  | .032 | .017                          | .376        |
|                            | Income          | -.310                       | .082 | -.276                     | -3.794 | .000 | -.470                         | -.149       |
|                            | Work Experience | .032                        | .021 | .120                      | 1.544  | .124 | -.009                         | .073        |
|                            | Education       | .062                        | .142 | .030                      | .435   | .664 | -.219                         | .343        |
| a. Dependent Variable: SWB |                 |                             |      |                           |        |      |                               |             |

**6.2. LOC and Gender based on Work Type**

As a whole, female employee with mean 11.88, std. dev. 2.970 had more external LOC than males (mean 11.25, std. dev.2.899). Male working in private jobs (mean 10.89, std. dev.3.136), female working in private jobs (mean 11.22, std. dev.3.202), Male working in banks (mean 11.68, std. dev.2.563) and female working in banks (mean 12.88, std. dev.2.280) show that male and female bankers among the group surveyed had the highest external LOC as compared to employees engaged in other works.

**6.3. LOC and SWB**

A significant negative correlation was found between LOC and SWB for employees researched with  $r = -.087$ , 2 tailed significance .043 ( $p < .05$ ). This shows that as participants had more external LOC, their level of SWB decreased, rejecting the null hypothesis there is no significant relationship between LOC and SWB of employees working in private sector organizations in Nigeria. Thus internal LOC employees were having a better well being than their external LOC counterparts.

**6.4. LOC and Age**

A surprising finding of the study was that with  $r = .152$ , 2 tailed significance  $.032$  ( $p < .05$ ) a significant positive correlation was found between age and LOC. This rejects the null hypothesis that LOC will not become more internal with increasing age.

**6.5. LOC and Income of Employees**

A negative correlation was registered between earnings and LOC as with the increase in income of the employees more internal LOC was registered ( $r = -.086$ ,  $p < .05$ ). It rejects the null hypothesis that LOC has no significant effect on income earned by employees.

**6.6. SWB and Marital Status**

Married male employees (4.75, std. deviation .931) had lower degree of SWB as compared to their single counterparts with mean 4.93, std. deviation .997. In sharp contrast married females were better off in SWB with mean 4.86, std. deviation .895 than single ones (mean 4.76, std. deviation .890). Analyzing the SWB level based on the marital status of the employees it was established through K independent samples (median test) that married employees had score more than equal to median thereby implying that as compared to their single counterparts, their overall well being is better. The chi square value of 2.884, df 1 and asymptotic significance  $.049$  ( $p < .05$ ) further rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between married and single employees vis-à-vis SWB.

**6.7. Gender and Work Type Differentials**

One way analysis of variances (ANOVA) found that there is a significant difference between males and female working in banks and other private sector undertaking in the surveyed area for LOC with  $F(3,195) = 3.771$ ,  $p < .05$ . Levene statistic (2.266) however establishes that group variances are equal as  $.082$  significance shows that variances of four groups are not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ). Conducting Welch and Brown-Forsythe test statistic, however confirm that group score vis-à-vis LOC is significant (refer table 3).

**Table 3. Robust Tests of Equality of Means**

| LOC Score                        |                        |     |         |      |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|-----|---------|------|
|                                  | Statistic <sup>a</sup> | df1 | df2     | Sig. |
| Welch                            | 4.749                  | 3   | 102.882 | .004 |
| Brown-Forsythe                   | 3.977                  | 3   | 188.544 | .009 |
| a. Asymptotically F distributed. |                        |     |         |      |

Tukey HSD test shown in table 4 found significant difference for LOC score of males working in private jobs and female working in banks with significance level  $.008$  and between females working in private jobs and banks with significance level  $.047$  ( $p < .05$  in both the cases). Thus the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female employees working in banks and other private sector organizations vis-à-vis LOC profile is rejected for these two groups.

**Table 4. Multiple Comparisons**

| LOC Score            |                      |                       |            |      |                         |             |
|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|-------------------------|-------------|
| Tukey HSD            |                      |                       |            |      |                         |             |
| (I) Gender Work type | (J) Gender Work type | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. | 95% Confidence Interval |             |
|                      |                      |                       |            |      | Lower Bound             | Upper Bound |
| Male Pvt. Job        | Female Bank Job      | -1.997*               | .616       | .008 | -3.59                   | -.40        |
| Female Pvt. Job      | Female Bank Job      | -1.667*               | .637       | .047 | -3.32                   | -.02        |

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

However no statistically significant difference was recorded in SWB levels for males and females working in banks and other private sector jobs. Therefore the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female employees working in banks and other private sector organizations vis-à-vis SWB profile is accepted only for these four groups.

**6.8. Gender/Marital Status and LOC-SWB Profiles:**

The study further through ANOVA and related procedure of Games Howell test could not establish any significant relationship between the four groups of married or single males and females on LOC-SWB profiles. Therefore null hypothesis marital status of employees has no significant effect on LOC and SWB profile stands accepted.

**7. Findings, Discussion and Conclusion:**

Taking up from the literature available it can be said that in today's workplaces the understanding of LOC and SWB is very important to critically understand the employee behaviour in larger interest of the organization. Conducted among the employees of North Eastern part of Nigeria it was theorized that external and internal LOC would have bearing on SWB of the participants and many key findings have emerged as a result. While work experience and education had no significant effect on SWB, with increase of age employees they were happier and richer ones have more internal LOC.

Employees having external LOC also were found to have less pleasurable well being as compared to their internal counterparts. Employees not withstanding gender, working in banks tend to blame external forces and luck or fate for their failings as compared to those working in other private concerns. Further on a holistic basis male employees had more internal LOC implying they looked into themselves for any faults in their lives or work while women were more on blaming side.

Another interesting finding was that married male employees were having lesser level of SWB and single males tended to be happier. Opposite was true for female participants where marriage meant happiness while single women employees were having lesser amount of SWB. Males working in private jobs if compared to females working in banks had statistically significant difference in their LOC levels and same is true for females in private jobs if compared to females working in banks. For other groups there were no significance differences. Coming to SWB all the four groups viz. males and females working in private jobs and banks registered no significant difference as far as their overall happiness level is concerned. Additionally for married and single males and females there was no significant association as far as their LOC and SWB profiles are concerned.

It can be concluded that LOC if properly influenced by the management practitioners can go a long way in positively affecting the SWB of the employees, which in turn would help organizations grow by having a satisfied workforce. As a personality construct balanced LOC expectancy and its role in the well being of employees can have an impact on the organizational environment as coping strategies can be devised to check the negativity among the workers.

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