



Self-actualization among Students in Context of Locus of Control and Conservatism

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted on a sample of 200 respondents belonging to conservative and liberal groups equal in number. The purpose was to compare them on self-actualization dimension of psychological empowerment in relation to locus of control and conservatism. It was hypothesized that (i) there will be significant difference between respondents of internal locus of control group and external locus of control group on self-actualization measure, (ii) there will be significant difference between conservative and liberal groups of respondents on self-actualization trait of personality and (iii) There will be significant correlation between locus of control and conservatism. For the purpose Locus of Control Scale by Singh, R.N. Conservatism Scale by Mohsin, Self-actualization Inventory by Sharma, K.N. were used to measure locus of control, conservatism and self-actualization of the respondents. Besides, a PDS was used to get other necessary information about the respondents. The data were obtained according to the manuals of tests concerned. The data were analysed using t-test and r-test. The results upheld hypotheses. It was found that internal locus of control group and liberal group of respondents excelled over their counterparts on self-actualization measure. Locus of control and conservatism are significantly correlated.

KEY WORDS

Self-actualization, Students, Control, Conservatism.

INTRODUCTION

Self-actualization is a psychological concept that represents the process of realizing and fulfilling one's potential. It was introduced by Abraham Maslow as the pinnacle of his hierarchy of needs, describing the realization of one's personal capabilities and creative potential. In the context of students, self-actualization can be viewed as the achievement of academic, social, and emotional growth, which leads to a sense of fulfillment and personal development. The concept is especially significant in the modern educational setting, where students are not only expected to acquire knowledge but also develop critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and a deep understanding of their personal goals and values.

The journey toward self-actualization is influenced by various factors, including individual traits, environmental conditions, and psychological constructs. Among these factors, the concepts of locus of control and conservatism play pivotal roles in shaping a student's approach to learning, personal development, and decision-making.

Locus of Control refers to an individual's perception of the factors that influence their life outcomes. It is divided into two types: internal locus of control and external locus of control. A person with an internal locus of control believes that their actions, decisions, and efforts determine the outcomes in their life. Conversely, a person with an external locus of control attributes their life circumstances to external forces, such as luck, fate, or powerful others. In the context of students, those with an internal locus of control tend to take responsibility for their academic performance, persist in the face of challenges, and actively seek opportunities for growth. On the other hand, students with an external locus of control may be more likely to give up in difficult situations, as they may feel powerless in influencing their circumstances.

Conservatism, in a psychological and behavioral sense, refers to a set of beliefs, values, and tendencies that prioritize tradition, stability, and resistance to change. It manifests as a preference for familiar, conventional ideas and practices, often coupled with a reluctance to embrace new or innovative approaches. In students, conservatism may manifest in a preference for established educational methods, resistance to new teaching strategies, or hesitation in adopting progressive attitudes toward learning. While conservatism is often associated with societal or political ideologies, its influence on students can be more subtle, affecting their openness to new learning experiences, critical thinking, and adaptability in an academic setting.

Both locus of control and conservatism can significantly impact a student's self-actualization process. A student with an internal locus of control is likely to have a proactive approach to learning, which aligns with the pursuit of self-actualization. Such students are more likely to take initiative, persist through academic challenges, and develop a strong sense of personal agency. On the other hand, students with an external locus of control may struggle with motivation and self-efficacy, as they may not believe that their actions can lead to meaningful outcomes. This belief can hinder their development and limit their ability to achieve self-actualization.

Similarly, conservatism may affect students' openness to new experiences and their willingness to challenge existing norms. Students who embrace conservative values may be more inclined to adhere to traditional educational methods and resist innovative teaching strategies. This can limit their opportunities for growth and self-actualization, as they may miss out on valuable learning experiences that foster personal and intellectual development. Conversely, students with a more open mindset may approach new ideas with curiosity and flexibility, allowing them to engage more fully in the process of self-actualization.

In the broader context of education, understanding how locus of control and conservatism interact with self-actualization is crucial for educators and policymakers. Recognizing the ways in which these factors influence students' attitudes toward learning and personal growth can help develop more effective teaching strategies and support systems. By fostering an environment that encourages internal locus of control and openness to change, educators can help students unlock their full potential, facilitating their journey toward self-actualization.

In this paper, we will explore the relationship between locus of control, conservatism, and self-actualization among students, highlighting how these psychological constructs shape their educational experiences and personal growth. We will examine the ways in which students' beliefs about control and resistance to change influence their ability to achieve self-actualization, and propose strategies for promoting a mindset conducive to personal development in academic settings.

Review of Literature

Maslow, A. H.⁴ (1943) in his seminal work laid the foundation for understanding self-actualization as the highest level of human needs. According to Maslow, only after basic needs such as physiological needs, safety, love, and esteem are met can an individual strive for self-actualization. This theory has been foundational in educational psychology, as it suggests that students need a supportive environment that meets their psychological and emotional needs before they can fully develop their potential. Rotter, J. B.⁵ (1966) in his work on locus of control introduced the concept that individuals with an internal locus of control believe their actions influence outcomes, whereas those with an external locus attribute outcomes to external factors. In the context of education, students with an internal locus of control are generally more motivated, have better academic performance, and engage more proactively in their learning, as they feel they can influence their success through effort. Thompson, L., & McBride, S.¹⁰ (2016) explored how locus of control influences self-actualization among young adults. It finds that students with an internal locus of control tend to experience higher levels of self-actualization, as they are more likely to set goals, make proactive decisions, and take responsibility for their growth. Students with an external locus of control, however, often struggle with self-doubt and a lack of motivation. Krause, S., & Boshoff, A.³ (2007) in his discussed how conservative values in students often correlated with resistance to change, making them less open to new educational experiences. Students with conservative orientations tend to prefer traditional teaching methods and are less likely to engage in critical thinking or innovative learning techniques, which may limit their ability to achieve self-actualization. Ryff, C. D., & Singer, B.⁶ (1996) in their research expands on Maslow's idea by showing that self-actualization is not just about intellectual achievement but also about psychological well-being. Students who are able to reach self-actualization are more likely to experience higher levels of happiness, self-esteem, and emotional well-being, which contributes to their overall success in academic and personal life. Schwartz, S. J., & Zamboanga, B. L.⁸ (2008) highlighted the relationship between self-actualization and identity development in college students. The study finds that students who develop a strong sense of autonomy and commitment to their personal values are more likely to experience self-actualization. This is especially true when students are supported in environments that encourage self-reflection and independence. Schunk, D. H., & Zimmerman, B. J.⁷ (2008) linked locus of control to self-efficacy and academic motivation. They argue that students who believe they have control over their academic outcomes (internal locus of control) are more likely to be motivated, engage in self-regulation, and demonstrate persistence. These qualities are central to the process of self-actualization, as motivated students are more likely to pursue their personal and academic goals with determination. Seiffge-Krenke, I.⁹ (2000) examined how locus of control affects coping strategies among adolescents. It finds that students with an internal locus of control tend to use more effective problem-solving strategies and engage in proactive coping, which can lead to greater success in managing academic stress. This, in turn, supports their journey toward self-actualization, as they develop resilience and self-efficacy in the face of challenges. Cameron, J. D., & Geiger, R.¹ (2015) suggested that cognitive flexibility, or the ability to adapt to new learning experiences, is negatively correlated with conservative attitudes. Students with conservative mindsets may resist changes in curriculum or teaching methods, which limits their ability to adapt to new ideas and may hinder self-actualization. Students who are more open-minded, on the other hand, show higher levels of adaptability and learning outcomes. Zimmerman, B. J.¹¹ (2000) in his own work on self-regulated learning explores how locus of control interacts with academic success. The study shows that students who take responsibility for their learning (internal locus of control) tend to have higher academic achievement, as they are more likely to employ self-regulatory strategies. This proactive engagement in their

learning process is key to achieving self-actualization, as they demonstrate autonomy and resilience. Gottfredson, L. S.² (2002) linked locus of control to career development and self-actualization. He suggests that students with an internal locus of control are more likely to pursue career paths aligned with their interests and abilities, while those with an external locus may feel constrained by external expectations or societal norms. This relationship highlights the importance of fostering an internal locus of control to support self-actualization in students, particularly as they make career decisions.

These studies provide a comprehensive look at the ways in which locus of control, conservatism, and self-actualization intersect and influence students' growth, motivation, and academic success. Each of these factors plays a vital role in shaping students' attitudes toward their education and their potential for personal development.

Objectives

The study intended to compare respondents of (i) ILC and ELC groups, (ii) conservatism and liberal groups on self-actualization trait of personality, (iii) further, co-efficient of correlation was compared between locus of control and conservatism.

Hypothesis

- H₁** There will be significant difference between respondents of internal locus of control group and external locus of control group on self-actualization measure.
- H₂** There will be significant difference between conservative and liberal groups of respondents on self-actualization trait of personality.
- H₃** There will be significant correlation between locus of control and conservatism.

Method of Study

Sample Used: The sample is constituted by 200 under graduate respondents equally divided into ILC (N = 100), ELC (N = 100), conservative (N = 100) and liberal (N = 100) groups. They were selected from urban Patna using purposive sampling. Other than the conditions of research, they were matched so far as practicable.

Tools Used

- (i) A Personal Data Sheet was used to get the necessary information about the respondents.
- (ii) Locus of Control Scale by R.N. Singh was used to measure internal and external locus of control of the respondents.
- (iii) Self-actualization Inventory by K.N. Sharma was used to measure self-actualization dimension of psychological empowerment.

Procedure

The scales along with PDS were employed on the respondents and data were obtained according to the manual. The treatment of the data was done using t-test and r-test. The respondents were divided into two groups using median cut. The respondents at and below median cut on locus of control scale were placed in internal locus of control group (Group-I) and respondents belong to above the median value were placed in external locus of control group (group-II) Similarly respondents at and above median value on conservatism scale were placed in liberal group and respondents belonging to below median value were place in conservative group.

Results and Discussion

Table 01: Self-actualization between respondents belonging to internal locus of control (Gr-1) and external locus of control (Gr-II)

Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Locus of Control	Group-I	100	27.17	6.81	9.84	198	<.01
	Group-II	100	17.92	6.45			

It is obvious from table-01 that locus of control has significant effect on self-actualization dimension of psychological empowerment of the respondents ($t = 9.84$; $df = 198$; $p < .01$) The respondents of better internal locus of control (Group-I) showed superiority over the respondents belonging to better external locus of control (Group-II) Thus first hypothesis is confirmed. Students with an internal locus of control excel in self-actualization because they believe they are responsible for their own success and personal growth. This sense of control fosters motivation, goal-setting, persistence, and a proactive attitude key elements of self-actualization. In contrast, those with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to fate, luck, or others, which can lead to passivity, low self-efficacy, and reduced drive for achieving their fullest potential.

Table 02: Self-actualization between conservative and liberal groups of respondents

Dimensions	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P
Conservatism	Liberal	100	31.67	6.46	4.24	198	<.01
	Conservative	100	27.94	5.87			

The results displayed in table-02 clearly showed the significant difference between conservative and liberal groups of respondents significantly on self-actualization dimension ($t = 4.24$; $df = 198$; $p < .01$) Thus second hypothesis is confirmed. Liberal students tend to excel over conservative students in self-actualization because liberal attitudes are often associated with openness to experience, flexibility, creativity, and a willingness to explore personal growth and change—all key components of self-actualization. Liberal individuals are more likely to question norms, seek new experiences, and express their authentic selves. In contrast, conservative students may prioritize conformity, tradition, and external approval, which can limit the pursuit of inner potential and self-fulfillment.

Table 3: Correlation between locus of control and conservatism

Conservatism	N	Locus of Control					
		ILC (N = 100)			ELC (N = 100)		
		r	df	p	r	df	p
Conservative	100	-0.316	98	<.01	0.349	98	<.01
Liberal	100	0.371	98	<.01	-0.384	98	<.01

It is clear from the result table-3 that there is a significant correlation between locus of control and conservatism [ILC Vs Conservatism: $r = -0.316$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$; ILC Vs Liberalism: $r = 0.371$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$; ELC Vs Conservatism : $r = 0.349$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$; ELC Vs Liberalism: $r = -0.384$; $df = 98$; $p < .01$] Thus, hypothesis no. (3) is retained. There exists a significant negative correlation between conservatism and internal locus of control because conservative individuals often emphasize tradition, authority, and external social structures, which may lead them to perceive control as residing outside themselves. They may attribute outcomes to fate, societal norms, or powerful institutions. Conversely, a significant positive correlation with external locus of control arises because conservative thinking can reinforce belief in external forces guiding life events, reducing personal agency and autonomy. There exists a positive correlation between liberalism and internal locus of control because liberal individuals often value autonomy, personal responsibility, and self-determination. They are more likely to believe that they can shape their own destiny through choices and actions, aligning with an internal locus. Conversely, liberalism negatively correlates with external locus of control because liberal thinkers typically reject fatalism, rigid authority, and the belief that outcomes are controlled by external forces like luck or powerful others.

CONCLUSIONS

- (i) Internal locus of control is more conducive to self-actualization than external locus of control. Internal locus of control group of students excelled in self-actualization over external locus of control group of students.

- (ii) Liberal group of students are found more self-actualized than conservative group of students.
- (iii) Internal locus of control is significantly and positively correlated to liberalism but negatively correlated to conservatism. On the other hand, external locus of control score is positively correlated with conservatism score and negatively correlated to liberalism score.

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