

Validating a Locus of Control Teaching Demonstration Measure

Terry F. Pettijohn, The Ohio State University-Marion Terry F. Pettijohn II & Donald F. Sacco, Jr., Mercyhurst College

Presented at the 11th Annual American Psychological Society Teaching Institute, Chicago, Illinois, May 27, 2004

E-mail: pettijohn.1@osu.edu or tpettijohn@mercyhurst.edu

Abstract

College students completed Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control (LOC) Scale and Pettijohn's (1990) LOC scale. Pettijohn's LOC scale was originally developed as a classroom teaching demonstration. Although students scored similarly on both measures, the potential limitations of using Pettijohn's LOC scale in research settings outside the classroom are discussed.

Introduction

Locus of control is the general term that refers to the expectancy that an individual's reinforcements are controlled by either internal or external factors. People with an internal locus of control believe that they control their own destiny and that their actions affect their outcomes. Those individuals with an external locus of control perceive themselves as being controlled by fate or luck and believe their outcomes happen by chance. This concept was developed by the social learning theorist Julian Rotter (1966), who constructed the Locus of Control (LOC) Scale to assess the extent to which an individual possesses internal or external reinforcement beliefs. Research has shown that those with an internal locus of control tend to be more hardworking, have better coping skills, and practice more preventative health measures than those with an external locus of control.

Background on Pettijohn LOC

- Pettijohn (1990) developed a 20 question true/false teaching demonstration test based on Rotter's original concept to provide psychology college students with a general idea of where they stand on the LOC personality dimension. The measure can be found online
<<http://www.dushkin.com/connectext/psy/ch11/survey11.mhtml>>
- Over the years, many researchers have inquired about the reliability and validity of Pettijohn's LOC scale. These requests led the current researchers to consider the usefulness of this classroom demonstration as a LOC measurement tool.

Hypothesis

The Pettijohn LOC was originally constructed as a teaching tool, not a formal research instrument. Therefore, we hypothesized that the Pettijohn LOC measure would be moderately valid and reliable with regard to the original LOC measure developed by Rotter.

