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Locus Of Control And Examination Taking Behaviour Among Secondary School Students In Delta North Senatorial District

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Abstract: *The study examined the extent to which locus of control could predict examination-taking behavior of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. The purpose was to establish the role of locus of control in promoting good examination-taking behavior among secondary school students in the ongoing campaign against examination malpractices. This study adopted the correlational research design. In the 159 public secondary schools in the Delta North Senatorial District, there were 16,473 senior secondary school students. (Ministry of Education Asaba). A sample of 455 students were drawn and used for the study. Six research questions were raised to guide the study and corresponding six Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance. The instrument used to gather data for the study was the questionnaire. The psychometric properties of the instruments were established. Specifically, the instrument was adjudged adequate for face and construct validity by experts in the department and my supervisor. The reliability index of 0. 87 was yielded and adjudged adequate for use. The instrument was administered by the researcher with the assistance of three post-graduate students who were properly briefed. The data gathered were organized and simple regression was used. The research questions were answered with Pearson's correlation coefficient of determination while simple regression was used to test the hypothesis at 0.5 level of significance. It was found out that Locus of control predicts examination-taking behavior of secondary school students. The findings were discussed, and it was recommended that schools should design and implement programs that promotes internal locus of control among students.*

Keywords: Locus of Control, Examination-Taking Behavior, Study Habits

INTRODUCTION

Examination-taking behaviour refers to the actions, strategies, and attitudes that individuals exhibit when they are taking an examination or test. This behaviour can encompass a wide range of actions, including preparation methods, test-taking strategies, stress management techniques, and emotional responses during the examination process. Preparation Strategies involve how individuals prepare themselves before the exam, including studying, practicing, and revising the material that will be covered. Some students prefer to create detailed study schedules, while others may rely on flashcards or practice tests.

Examination test-taking strategies involve specific techniques individuals use during the exam to maximize their performance, such as methods for answering different types of questions, time management strategies, and approaches to dealing with difficult or unfamiliar material (Baker & McCarthy, 2022). Stress management techniques may include deep breathing exercises, positive self-talk, or visualization techniques to stay calm and focused during the exam, as examinations can be stressful and impact performance (Käthner et al., 2019). Adaptive responses involve the ability to adjust one's strategies or mindset in response to unexpected challenges or difficulties that may arise during the exam (Iviemu, 2021). Emotional responses encompass individuals' emotional reactions to the exam environment, such as feelings of confidence, frustration, or self-doubt, which can influence cognitive performance and decision-making during the exam (Pekrun, 2006). Educational psychology concerns how learners acquire, store, and retrieve learning content (Ormrod, 2016). One common way to assess learners' ability to retrieve this content is through examinations (Iviemu, 2021). To pass an exam, students must prepare thoroughly, demonstrating good study habits, self-control, and self-understanding to build confidence (Iviemu, 2022)..

Psychologically, the researcher will look at Locus of control in understanding students' behaviour and see if it can predict their exam-taking success. Locus of control refers to the extent to which individuals feel that they have control over events that impact their lives. It influences our response to events and our motivation to act. If we believe that we hold the key to our fate, we are more likely to take action to change our situation. On the other hand, if we believe that the outcome is out of our hands, we may be less likely to work towards change.

In the case of students' examination-taking behaviours, the idea of locus of control is simple and clear. It states that examination behaviours are guided by different types of reinforcements, which can be positive or negative. Depending on what reinforcement a student experiences, they learn to believe different things about what causes their actions, and those beliefs have a huge impact on their examination-taking behaviours. There are two types of locus of control: internal and external. Internal locus of control means that control comes from within. Students have personal control over their own behaviour towards examinations. Students with an internal locus of control believe they have personal agency over their own lives and actions, which results in more self-efficacy. If they succeed, they believe it is because they did the right thing and put in the right amount of effort. If they experience failure, they

would blame no one but themselves. They would believe that they could have changed the outcome if they had worked harder or made different decisions.

Students that possess resilience and an internal locus of control are probably motivated to succeed. Rotter (1956) asserts that children with this kind of locus of control often do better than those without. This is probably due to the fact that pupils who possess an internal locus of control accept accountability and responsibility for their conduct. Because they don't think chance will help them achieve, they have higher expectations for themselves. They thus have a tendency to take charge of their employment, their personal objectives, and everything else that has significance for them. Students in this group will put a lot of effort into developing good study habits and adhering to test regulations, or constructive exam-taking practices.

When someone has an external locus of control, it indicates that outside forces are in charge of them. Students who feel that circumstances outside their control dictate their behaviour and the results they get are said to have an external locus of control. This set of students will involve themselves in any kind of examination malpractices or negative examination-taking behaviours to pass their examinations. The idea was created by Jillian B. Rotter and refers to the extent to which individuals feel they have control over the course of events in their life rather than being influenced by other factors. One major issue that is linked to a number of hazards for illegal or inappropriate action is having an external locus of control as the primary motivator. Additionally, research indicates that those who have an external locus of control are less likely than those who have an internal locus of control to participate in therapy.

Naturally, this does not imply that students who have an external locus of control are the only ones who may act offensively during tests. The locus of control and related beliefs affect students' cognition and behaviour and, as such, have a vital role to play across multiple areas of their lives. While an internal locus of control is typically beneficial, too much can also have potential downsides, such as being overly self-reliant and failing to ask for help (Galvin et al., 2018). The social learning theory, from which the idea of the role of reinforcement of good behaviour originally arose, suggests that we learn by observing what goes on around us, leading us to form beliefs that specific behaviour results in predictable outcomes (Galvin et al., 2018).

The researcher examined study habits to see whether they might predict how learners would behave while taking exams. Exam-taking behavior and study habits have a complex and wide-ranging relationship that affects many facets of academic achievement. While examination-taking behaviour refers to the behaviours, methods, and attitudes shown during the process of taking examinations or tests, study habits include the behaviours, techniques, and routines people use to interact with and remember course content. Understanding this correlation offers valuable perspectives on how the caliber of study practices impacts test performance results. The foundation for thorough test preparation techniques is laid by productive study habits. Disciplined study habits increase the likelihood of regular revision, active learning, and utilizing a variety of study materials. Their familiarity with the topic is improved, their comprehension is deepened, and their retention is facilitated by this conscientious approach, which eventually results in improved test performance (Okorodudu & Ossai 2004). The adoption of successful test-taking techniques during exams is strongly influenced by the calibre of study habits. Pupils who have developed good study habits are better able to use tactical techniques, including time management, critical thinking, and methodical issue analysis. They do better on tests because they are better at recognizing important details, coming up with answers, and performing their best under time pressure. Effective study techniques are essential for controlling exam-related stress and anxiety. Because they feel more prepared and confident in their skills, those who follow productive study habits report feeling less stressed. Frequent study sessions, effective planning, and self-discipline help students feel in charge of their exam experience, which lowers anxiety and promotes a composed and concentrated attitude during tests. Flexible learning strategies are crucial, as shown by the link between study habits and flexible test replies. Strong study habits enable students to be more flexible when modifying their approaches to meet unanticipated obstacles or challenging questions. Because of their well-organized study habits, they are able to use their problem-solving abilities, get a deeper understanding of the subject matter, and successfully traverse new information, which helps them do better on difficult test scenarios. Emotional reactions to tests are also influenced by study habits. Proactive study practices are associated with higher levels of positive feelings during tests, including drive, confidence, and a sense of success. On the other hand, bad study habits are linked to increased worry, negative emotions, and self-doubt, which may affect one's ability to think clearly and make decisions during tests (Credé et al., 2017).

Statement of the Problem

Examination taking in secondary schools in Nigeria is facing numerous problems that render the attainment of its objective and purpose useless. The fear of examination failure, inadequate preparation due to inability to withstand internal and external pressures have led many students to resort to negative examination-taking behaviours. These unethical and illegal behaviours include impersonation, seeking external assistance, collusion, taking mobile phones into the examination hall, showing signs of ill health during examination, and even bribing teachers and examiners to pass their examinations. Such behaviours are caused by a lack of locus of control in students. Literature suggests that the use of psychological methods can promote positive examination behaviour,

such as Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy and study habits. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the predictive value of locus of control on the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students. The problem of this study is to what extent could locus of control predict positive examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District?

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. To what extent will Locus of control predict the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.?

2. What is the moderating impact of study habits on the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students?

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to find out how Locus of control and Self-efficacy predict the examination-taking behaviour of Secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District of Delta State. Specifically, this study intends to

1. Determine the extent to which Locus of control predicts the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

2. Determine the extent to which the moderating impact of study habits on locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to be tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the extent to which Locus of control predicts the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

2. There is no significant moderating impact of study habit in the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopted the correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 16,473 senior secondary two (SS 2) students from the existing 159 public secondary schools in Delta North Senatorial District (see Appendix I for details). A sample size of 455 SS 2 students from five local government areas in Delta North Senatorial District. The multistage sampling method was used for this study. A questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Locus of Control Rating Scale (LCRS): This scale was adapted from the Levenson Multidimensional Locus of Control Scales developed by Levenson (1973). It contains 24 items (which was reduced to 9 items after validation), structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. All the items on the scale will be summed up to form a single score of 18. The benchmark that will be used to measure locus of control using the scale is 9. In other words, students who score 9 and above will be deemed to have an internal locus of control, while those who score below 9 will be deemed to have an external locus of control. Study Habit Rating Scale (SARS): The study habit scale was adapted from Karim & Banu (2000).

The study habit rating scale contains 50 items (which were reduced to 14 items after validation), structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. All the items on the scale will be summed up to form a single score of 28. The benchmark that will be used to measure study habits using the scale is 28. In other words, students who score 28 and above will be deemed to have positive study habits, while those who score below 28 will be deemed to have negative study habits.

Examination-Taking Behavior Rating Scale (ETBRS): The scale was developed by the researcher with the help of the supervisor. The scale is a 13-item scale structured on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 for strongly disagree to 4 for strongly agree. All the items on the scale will be summed up to form a single score of 26. The benchmark that will be used to measure examination-taking behaviour using the scale is 26. In other words, students who score 26 and above will be deemed to have positive examination-taking behaviour, while those who score below 26 will be deemed to have negative examination-taking behaviour. The face validity

of the instrument was estimated through experts' judgement, while the content and construct validity were estimated through factor analysis of the principal component analysis method. After the face validity, 50 copies of the questionnaire were administered to 50 students who would not be part of the study, and the data obtained were subjected to factor analysis. The principal component analysis of the extraction method was used to estimate the content validity of the instrument. It yielded the following values: 60.53% for the Locus of Control Rating Scale; 81.23% for the study habit rating scale; and 70.55% for the examination-taking behavior rating scale.

To estimate the construct validity of the instruments, the rotated factor loading of the varimax method was done, which yielded the following values: 0.51-0.80 for the locus of control rating scale; 0.58-0.89 for study habits rating scale; and 0.58-0.79 for examination-taking behaviour rating scale. We tested the questionnaire on 50 students who were not involved in the study to assess the reliability of the research tool. The results were then analysed using the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient, a type of statistic used to find measures of internal consistency. The obtained coefficients include 0.51 for the locus-control rating scale, 0.73 for the self-efficacy rating scale, 0.64 for the study habits rating scale, 0.72 for the examination-taking behavior rating scale, and a general reliability of 0.87. The researcher will be assisted by three trained assistants to administer the questionnaire in schools in the nine local government areas of the senatorial district. Pearson's correlation coefficient of determination, simple, and multiple regression will be used to analyse the data. The research questions were answered with Pearson's correlation coefficient of determination. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent would Locus of control predict the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District?

Table 1: *Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of* Locus of control *and examination taking behaviour of secondary school students*

Variables	N	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Locus of control Examination Taking Behaviour	455	0.100	0.010	0.10	positive relationship

Table 1 shows the r-value of 0.100 as the amount of relationship between the Locus of control and examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.010 and the amount of contribution of Locus of control to examination-taking behaviour was 10.0%. The result showed a positive relationship between Locus of control and examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Research Question 2: What is the moderating impact of study habits on the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.?

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation(r) and Coefficient of Determination (r^2) of the moderating impact of study habits on the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students

Variables	N	R	r^2	r^2%	Decision
Locus of control Study habit Examination Taking Behaviour	455	0.103	0.011	0.11	positive relationship

Table 2 shows the r-value of 0.105 as the amount of relationship between the moderating impact of study habits on the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District. The coefficient of determination (r^2) was 0.011 and the amount of contribution of self-efficacy to examination-taking behaviour was 11.0%. The result showed a positive relationship between the moderating impact of study habits on the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the extent to which Locus of control predicts the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Table 3: linear regression of the analysis of Locus of control and examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students.

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	472.902	1	472.902	4.612	.032	

Residual	46451.449	453	102.542	Null hypothesis rejected
Total	46924.352	454		

$\alpha = 0.05$

Table 3 reveals a linear regression output of the relationship between the Locus of control and examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students. in Delta North Senatorial District. The computed F-value of 4.612 and a p-value of 0.032. Testing the null hypothesis at an alpha level of 0.05, the p-value of 0.032 was less than the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that Locus of control significantly predicts the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students. in Delta North Senatorial District.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant moderating impact of study habits in the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District

Table 4: linear regression of the analysis of the moderating impact of study habits in the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students.

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Decision
1	(Constant)	59.524	3.566		16.694	.000	
	Locus of Control	-.247	.118	-.114	-2.086	.038	
	Study Habit	.041	.083	.027	.490	.625	Hypothesis accepted

a. Dependent Variable: Examination Taking Behaviour

Table 4 shows the result of regression statistics which was used to estimate the moderating impact of study habits in the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District. From the result, the locus of control had a beta weight of -0.114, t = -2.086, while study habit had a beta weight of 0.027, t = 0.490. the result showed that the locus of control is significant but the study habit is not significant at an alpha level of 0.05. therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted which implies that study habits do not significantly moderate the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Discussion of results

Extent to which Locus of control predicts the examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students

The finding that there is a significant difference in the extent to which locus of control predicts examination-taking behavior among secondary school students in the Delta North Senatorial District. Locus of control refers to an individual's belief in their ability to control events affecting them. Internal locus of control refers to individuals believing their actions significantly influence their outcomes, while external locus of control attributes outcomes to external factors. In the context of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District, this difference in predictive power can be attributed to various factors. The region's cultural and socioeconomic environment may influence how locus of control is perceived and acted upon. Students from economically challenged backgrounds may develop a more external locus of control due to perceived lack of resources and opportunities. Variability in educational support and resources in different schools could also impact exam behavior. Parental influence also plays a role, with some families emphasizing personal effort and responsibility, while others focus on external factors. Students' individual experiences and personal traits also play a role. A high internal locus of control may lead to more proactive exam preparation, while an external locus may result in a more passive approach. This finding agrees with Anyanwu (2020), Akinleke & Adeaga (2014) and Jansen et al. (2017) who found a positive relationship between locus of control and examination taking behaviour.

Moderating impact of study habits in the extent to which locus of control and examination-taking behaviour among secondary school students

The study reveals that study habits do not significantly influence the relationship between locus of control and examination-taking behavior. This suggests that students' preparation for exams does not significantly alter the impact of their locus of control on their exam-related behaviors. This might be because locus of control is a more fundamental determinant of examination behavior compared to study habits. Students with an internal locus of control may be highly motivated and proactive in their study habits, while those with an external locus of control may exhibit less variability in their study habits due to their belief in external factors. If study habits are relatively uniform across the student population, they may not significantly impact the relationship between

locus of control and examination behavior. The interaction between locus of control and study habits might be too complex to capture through moderation, as it could influence a broad range of examination behaviors beyond just study habits. The effectiveness of study habits might not be significantly different across the spectrum of locus of control. External factors such as the educational environment, support systems, or personal circumstances might overshadow the impact of study habits. This finding is in line with Ossai (2011), Tus et al. (2020) and Prasetyo et al. (2019)

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that locus of control predicts the positive examination-taking behaviour of secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion that locus of control is a predictor of positive examination-taking behavior among secondary school students in Delta North Senatorial District, several recommendations are made for schools, government, teachers, and students to enhance academic outcomes and support effective examination behaviors:

1. Schools should design and implement programs that promote internal locus of control among students.

2. Government should develop educational policies that support programs and initiatives aimed at enhancing students' locus of control

3. Learners should embrace challenges and view failures as opportunities for growth. Understanding that effort and persistence are key to success can enhance locus of control

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