



Faculty of
Psychology and
Educational Sciences
"Ovidius" University
of Constanta, Romania



BLACK SEA JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLOGY



www.bspsychology.ro



9 772068 464001



The impact of locus of control on job performance and salary satisfaction

Brînzei (Ciocârlan) Georgiana-Iuliana¹, Cioară Nicoleta-Alexandra², Cuzub Alexandru-Mihai³, Rus Mihaela⁴

^{1,2,3}Independent Researcher, Romania, Ovidius University in Constanta, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Romania
georgianaciocarlan@yahoo.com¹, nicoalexcioara96@gmail.com²,
cuzubalexmihai@gmail.com³, psiholog_m@yahoo.com⁴

Abstract. The purpose of this research was to analyze the impact of locus of control on workplace performance and pay satisfaction on a sample of 61 participants, both male and female. The methods used in this study were: the Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS), the Williams and Anderson's Performance Scale and the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire. The questionnaires were completed through the Goole forms platform. The sampling technique was one of convenience, thus we selected the people available to participate in the study. According to the results, there is no significant difference in locus of control according to gender. In contrast, there are significant correlations between locus of control and job performance and locus of control and pay satisfaction.

Keywords. Locus of control, job performance, salary satisfaction.

Introduction

This study intends to highlight the importance of locus of control on job performance and satisfaction with salary. Additionally, it aims to provide updated validations of these aspects through correlation analyses, exploring potential variations in behavior with respect to gender.

Despite the existence of scientifically validated studies before 2016, the absence of recent confirmations highlights the need for current data to strengthen our understanding. The current sample, being one of convenience, may lack the certainty of universally accepted results. Extending the study to an enterprise or institution could reveal whether these findings remain consistent on a larger scale, especially in contexts where employer responsibilities are clearly defined.



Locus of control, categorized as internal or external, holds suggestive implications for employees' reactions to job performance and perceptions of salary. Individuals with an internal locus of control are often more motivated and committed to achieving professional goals, contributing to enhanced work performance.

Furthermore, satisfaction with pay is intricately linked to locus of control. Internally oriented individuals perceive their salary as a direct outcome of their efforts, fostering motivation. In contrast, those with an external locus of control view their salary as a predetermined amount, unrelated to personal performance. This perception can diminish motivation, leading to frustration and resentment, as the salary is perceived to be dictated by organizational policies rather than individual contributions.

A comprehensive understanding of these concepts can equip organizations with valuable tools for optimizing employee motivation and management. Tailoring management techniques and compensation structures to individual characteristics can foster a harmonious work environment, potentially elevating overall employee performance by encouraging diverse experiences and skill development.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Locus of control

Locus of control is a „concept resulting from social learning theories, then a personality variable, much studied after J.B. Rotter proposed, in 1966, the first validated scale of internality/externality: it is about establishing who, in people's expectations, controls the reinforcements of which they are the object. Internals see in themselves (what they are, what they do) this instance of control, which externals see in situations, in others, in destiny, in chance” (Doron & Parot, 2006, p.467).

In the American Psychological Association's dictionary, locus of control is defined as „a construct that is used to categorize people's basic motivational orientations and perceptions of how much control they have over the conditions of their lives. People with an external locus of control tend to behave in response to external circumstances and to perceive their life outcomes as arising from factors out of their control. People with an internal locus of control tend to behave in response to internal states and intentions and to perceive their life outcomes as arising from the exercise of their own agency and abilities.” (American Psychological Association, 2015, p. 608).

Perceived control has been extensively examined in specialized literature in various forms due to its association with a diverse range of effects at cognitive, affective, behavioral, and physiological levels. While control beliefs may have roots in social experiences, it is proposed that certain individuals are inherently inclined to perceive more control over their external environment than others. Researchers were prompted to explore this dispositional trait of locus of control when observing that some individuals appeared relatively „immune” to the influence of external factors (Ng et al., 2006).

According to Strauser (2002), locus of control is an individual's belief regarding their ability to control events in their life, influencing their trajectory toward success or failure. Consequently, an individual's success or failure may stem from their own attitudes or be ascribed to luck or chance.

In essence, locus of control denotes a generalized attitude, belief, or set of expectations about the causal relationship between a person's behavior and its consequences. There are two types of locus of control: internal and external. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that events in their lives result from their own efforts. Conversely, those attributing



events to external causes (e.g., luck, chance) exhibit an external locus of control (Cobb-Clark, 2015).

Individuals with an internal locus of control hold the belief that their efforts and commitment can exert influence and instigate change in their surroundings. These individuals are firmly convinced that the future is largely shaped by their actions and view success or failure as outcomes of their personal responsibilities. This conviction instills confidence in their capabilities and motivates them to strive for accomplishments (Arakeri & Sunagar, 2017). Those with an internal locus of control often set more intricate goals, exhibit greater resilience in the face of challenges, and experience lower levels of workplace stress. In a professional setting, employees with an internal locus of control tend to be less susceptible to external influence and persuasion (Cobb-Clark, 2015).

Conversely, individuals with an external locus of control tend to attribute the difficulties they encounter in life to circumstances and others. They believe that success is a result of luck or the actions of others, harbor skepticism about their ability to alter their circumstances through personal efforts, and may feel powerless in challenging situations (Arakeri & Sunagar, 2017).

Locus of control is intricately linked to motivation, exertion, performance, satisfaction, perceptions of the job, adherence to norms and regulations, supervisory styles, and more (Spector, 1982).

1.2. Job performance

Job performance is characterized as an aggregate of employee behaviors that hold significance for organizations, whether positively or negatively. These behaviors can be categorized into three distinct types: task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductivity (Chernyshenko & Stark, 2005). Task performance revolves around the employee's proficiency and capability to execute the central duties of the job. Contextual performance encompasses individual behaviors aimed at fostering the organizational, social, and psychological environment in which the core activities unfold. Conversely, counterproductive workplace behavior is delineated by actions that detrimentally impact the well-being of the organization (Ekanayaka, 2021).

Work performance denotes the quantity and quality of task execution by an individual or group, contingent on the motivation, skills, and knowledge of those undertaking the task (Katebi et al., 2022).

There are three approaches to assessing an individual's job performance. The first involves identifying and categorizing work outcomes based on their levels (e.g., monthly sales). The second method entails the evaluation and categorization of employees by supervisors or bosses based on their efficiency. The third and often considered most effective method is self-assessment, contributing to increased employee focus on their objectives (Chen & Silverthorne, 2008).

Two relevant aspects characterize job performance. Firstly, it is non-linear and varies according to environmental conditions. Secondly, performance pertains to the behavior under the individual's control, not the specific task they are required to perform (Katebi et al., 2022).

Several variables influence job performance, with organizational commitment being a key factor. Organizational commitment comprises three types: normative, affective, and continuance. Among these, affective commitment exerts a more substantial impact on performance, representing the emotional bond established between the employee and the organization (Kundi et al., 2021).



1.2. Salary satisfaction

Salary satisfaction stands out as a paramount motivator in the realm of work and is frequently a decisive factor in job selection.

According to Zlate (1981), the dynamics between motivation and satisfaction can be encapsulated in the following propositions:

- The state of satisfaction or dissatisfaction serves as an indicator of motivation, reflecting its efficacy or inefficacy in achievement. Satisfaction ensues when goals are met, while dissatisfaction arises when goals remain unfulfilled.

- Motivation and satisfaction exhibit a dual nature, functioning as both cause and effect. Motivation serves as a cause, and satisfaction represents an end state. Nevertheless, instances exist where intense and enduring satisfaction can transform into a source of motivation.

- Both motivation and satisfaction are intricately linked to the execution of activities, exerting either positive or negative influences.

Sociologist Zamfir Cătălin (2005) delved into the economic influence and identified its fundamental role in entering, sustaining, and departing from the workplace. This economic factor also contributes to a sense of security, catering to needs for esteem, power, prestige, and social standing. He observed that no discernible disparities exist in work performance between individuals with satisfactory salaries and those with higher salaries. Each group harbors distinct needs, and the fulfillment of these needs can impact their work approaches.

In a broader context, wages serve multiple functions for individuals, with their attitudes and reactions to payment holding significant sway in both affective and behavioral dimensions within the institutional framework (Shaw, 1999).

Pay satisfaction essentially reflects the degree of contentment and fulfillment an employee experiences regarding the financial compensation received in exchange for their labor. Various factors can influence satisfaction levels, including opportunities for promotion, remuneration commensurate with competence levels, seniority bonuses, achievement of targets, and more.

2. Research methods

2.1. Research objectives

The primary goal of this research is to examine the influence of locus of control on both job performance and salary satisfaction. The secondary objectives encompass the following:

1. Recognizing relevant variations in locus of control based on gender.
2. Establishing a substantial correlation between locus of control and job performance.
3. Establishing a relevant correlation between locus of control and salary satisfaction.

2.2. Hypotheses

Aligned with the aforementioned objectives, the following hypotheses were developed:
Hypothesis 1: A significant difference in locus of control between women and men exists.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant correlation between locus of control and job performance.

Hypothesis 3: A significant correlation exists between locus of control and satisfaction with pay.

2.3. Sample

The sample consists of 61 participants, both women (33 participants – 54.1%) and men (28 participants – 45.9%), aged between 19 and 59 years. Among them, 45 participants out of 61 come from urban areas and 16 participants out of 61 come from rural areas. Participants work in various fields such as sales, IT, customer relations, advertising, tourism, education, etc. The sampling method we opted for was the non-probabilistic one, namely: convenience sampling, through which we selected the available participants, who volunteered to contribute to the realization of this work. Participants took part in the research without receiving any benefit.

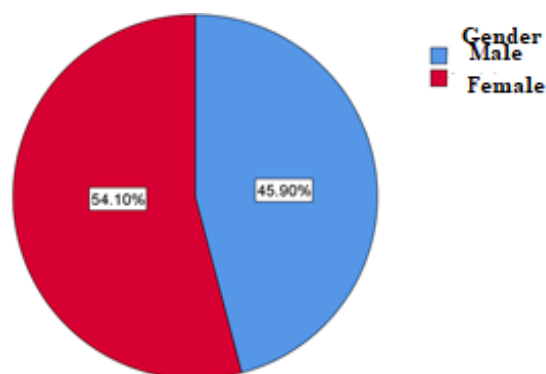


Figure 1. Distribution of participants according to gender

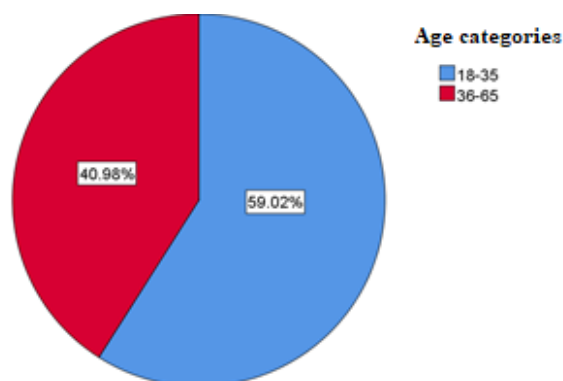


Figure 2. Distribution of participants according to age categories

2.4. Instruments

To measure locus of control, job performance and salary satisfaction we used the following tests:

1. **Work Locus of Control Scale (WLCS)**. This questionnaire was translated into Romanian by Dragoş Iliescu and consists of 16 items that measure locus of control at work. Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale, where 1 – „strongly disagree”, 2 – „moderately disagree”, 3 – „slightly disagree”, 4 – „slightly agree”, 5 – „moderately agree” and 6 – „agree strong”.



2. **Williams and Anderson's Workplace Performance Scale.** This questionnaire was translated into Romanian by Dragoş Iliescu and consists of 21 items that measure workplace performance. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 – „strongly disagree”, 2 – „disagree”, 3 – „agree” and 4 – „strongly agree”.

3. **Heneman and Schwab's Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire.** This questionnaire was translated into Romanian by Sîrbu Alexandru-Andrei and consists of 18 items that measure satisfaction with the salary and are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 – „very dissatisfied” and 5 – „very satisfied”.

2.5. Research design

The surveys were completed through the Google Forms platform from October 30 to November 12, 2023. The research adheres to international ethical guidelines, ensuring the absolute confidentiality of the collected data, as well as the anonymity and safety of the participants. No personally identifying information, such as names, phone numbers, or email addresses, was requested. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without facing consequences. The questionnaire comprised three sections, and participants' responses were stored in a locally saved database with strict confidentiality measures. Data analysis occurred between November 13 and November 20, 2023, and the results will be utilized exclusively for scientific purposes..

2.6. Ethical considerations

In conducting the research, ethical considerations were prioritized. The principle of providing information and obtaining consent from each participant in the study was upheld. Participants were briefed on the research objectives, the time commitment involved, the methods employed, and the voluntary nature of their participation, with the option to withdraw at any time without repercussions. Additionally, adherence to the principle of confidentiality and professional secrecy was maintained by refraining from requesting participants' names. Instead, a unique code, comprising two letters representing name initials and the first and last two digits of the birth year, was used.

2.7. Results

Upon conducting statistical analysis of the data, the following outcomes were derived:
Hypothesis 1: A significant difference in locus of control between women and men exists.

To assess the normality of the score distribution, we utilized the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 1. Evaluation of the score distribution's normality – locus of control variable

Tests of Normality							
	Sex	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
locus of control	Male	.153	28	.091	.949	28	.188
	Female	.107	33	.200*	.974	33	.604
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.							
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							



As indicated in Table 1, the significance coefficient (Sig.) for the locus of control variable in males is .091, exceeding 0.05, signifying a normal distribution of scores. Similarly, the significance coefficient (Sig.) for the locus of control variable in females is .200, also surpassing 0.05, indicating adherence to normality. Consequently, a parametric method, specifically the t-test for independent samples, will be employed in this scenario.

Table 2. Independent samples t-test – locus of control variable

		Independent Samples Test								
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper	
locus of control	Equal variances assumed	.068	.796	.689	59	.493	1.942	2.818	-3.697	7.580
	Equal variances not assumed			.691	57.999	.492	1.942	2.809	-3.682	7.565

The obtained results reveal that, in the Levene homogeneity test, the significance coefficient (Sig.) is .796, indicating a homogeneous distribution of scores. Additionally, in the initial line of the t-test table, the significance coefficient (Sig. 2-tailed) is .493, surpassing 0.05, suggesting the absence of significant differences between women and men concerning locus of control.

Previous research exploring gender disparities in locus of control has not yielded a unanimous consensus based on the examined samples, suggesting no substantial differences in this regard. Notably, distinctions seem to arise more in terms of the type of locus of control inherent to each individual, irrespective of gender or the beliefs ingrained during upbringing (Rotter, 1966).

Cultural variances also wield influence over how women and men express their locus of control. Discrepancies may emerge in specific contexts, such as fields like education, health, management, etc., or in the delineation individuals make between their personal and professional lives, a dynamic that can evolve over time in response to lived experiences. This evolution is subject to variation between women and men, with the acknowledgment that these trends are extensions of general tendencies and may differ within each gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant correlation between locus of control and job performance.

To assess the normality of the score distribution, we employed the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.



Table 3. Assessment of the normality of the score distribution – locus of control variables and job performance

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
locus of control	.108	61	.073	.978	61	.323
Performance at work	.062	61	.200*	.984	61	.610
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

As observed in Table 3, the significance coefficient (Sig.) for the locus of control variable is .073, exceeding 0.05, indicating a normal distribution of scores. The significance coefficient for the job performance variable is .200, also surpassing 0.05, signifying adherence to normality. Therefore, a parametric correlation method will be employed in this instance.

Table 4. Correlation result between locus of control and job performance

Correlations			
		Locus de control	Performance at work
Locus_de_control	Pearson Correlation	1	-.393**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	61	61
Performance at work	Pearson Correlation	-.393**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	61	61
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

As can be seen in table 4, the Pearson correlation coefficient value is -.393, which indicates a weak negative correlation between the two variables, significant at 0.01. This means that the hypothesis was statistically confirmed, which can also be seen in figure 7.

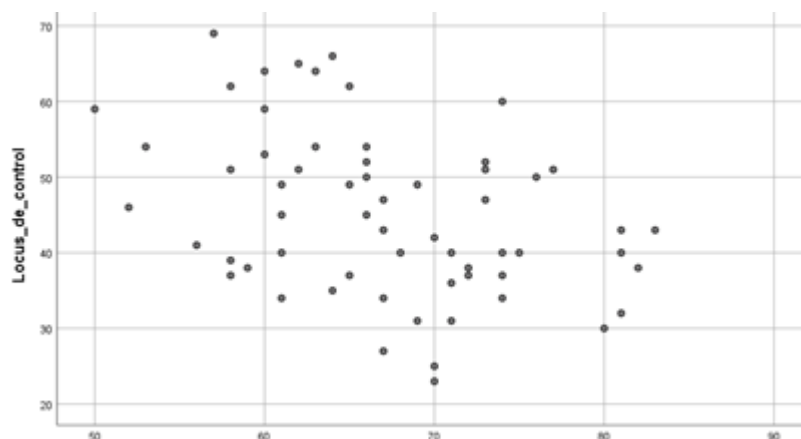


Figure 1. Point cloud – locus of control variables and job performance



Studies on locus of control and workplace performance have produced mixed results and depend on several factors, such as the type of organization and job specifics.

Although our result is statistically confirmed, the presented correlation is negative, which highlights that the perception of personal control is not an accurate view of professional performance, a fact confirmed by other research.

It should be noted that there are studies that support the existence of a positive correlation between internal locus of control and performance at work, as it is assumed that they are more motivated to take responsibility and manage it in order to achieve success.

In the context of the analysis of the motivation of human behavior and the locus of control, we talk about the need for achievement, as a need for performance, defining it as „the need to overcome obstacles, to succeed, to reach a high standard” (Schultz, 1986).

Hypothesis 3: A significant correlation exists between locus of control and satisfaction with pay

To calculate the normality of the score distribution we applied the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 5. Assessment of Score Distribution Normality – Locus of Control Variables and Salary Satisfaction

Tests of Normality						
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Locus of control	.108	61	.073	.978	61	.323
Satisfaction_with_salary	.083	61	.200*	.963	61	.065
*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.						
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

As indicated in Table 5, the significance coefficient (Sig.) for the locus of control variable is .073, exceeding 0.05, suggesting a normal distribution of scores. Similarly, the significance coefficient (Sig.) for the salary satisfaction variable is .200, surpassing 0.05, indicating adherence to normality. Consequently, a parametric correlation method will be employed in this instance.

Table 6. Correlation result between locus of control and job performance

Correlations			
		Locus de control	Satisfaction_wi th_salary
Locus_of_control	Pearson Correlation	1	-.594**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	61	61
Satisfaction_with_salary	Pearson Correlation	-.594**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	61	61

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As can be seen in table 8, the value of the Pearson correlation coefficient is $-.594$, which indicates a moderate negative correlation between the two variables, significant at 0.01 . This means that the hypothesis was statistically confirmed, which can also be seen in figure 10.

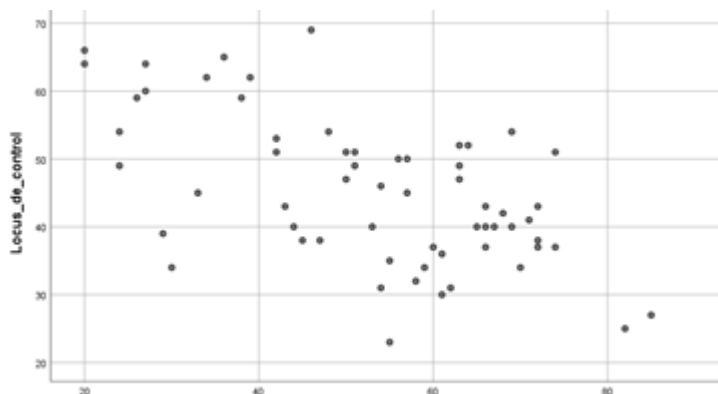


Figure 2. Point cloud – locus of control variables and salary satisfaction

The observed negative correlation between locus of control and satisfaction with salary suggests that the impact may vary depending on specific contextual factors, the measurement of variables, and the temporal context. The current societal trends, characterized by increasing desires and needs, contribute to a diminished appreciation of the value of earnings, leading to growing dissatisfaction. Individuals seem to prioritize other aspects over financial remuneration, contributing to the dominance of an external locus of control. Furthermore, the societal emphasis on external validation, fueled by a culture of criticism and cynicism, plays a role in this dynamic.

While an internal locus of control may influence an individual's capacity and willingness to negotiate pay, it is essential to acknowledge that organizational elements such as pay policies, hierarchical structures, and opportunities for advancement can significantly impact satisfaction with salary independently of locus of control.



Conclusions

The findings from existing research on gender differences in locus of control suggest a lack of unanimous consensus. Results from various research samples do not strongly indicate significant differences between men and women concerning locus of control. Instead, it is observed that these differences may be more associated with the type of locus of control, which is an individual characteristic, rather than with gender or the beliefs individuals were exposed to during upbringing, as proposed by Rotter's theory in 1966.

Comprehending the intricate and dynamic interplay between locus of control, gender, and culture necessitates context-sensitive approaches and heightened attention to individual variability. The way individuals construct and exhibit their locus of control is influenced by numerous factors, and generalizations about gender differences should be approached cautiously to account for human diversity and complexity.

Studies exploring the relationship between locus of control and workplace performance have yielded varied results, highlighting the complexity of this interaction and the impact of variable factors such as organizational type and job specifics. Even if the results obtained in our study statistically confirm a negative correlation between locus of control and work performance, it is crucial to acknowledge that this relationship is not unidirectional and precise.

As demonstrated by other researchers, who have identified positive correlations between internal locus of control and job performance, there exists room for multiple interpretations and individual variations. These studies imply that individuals with an internal locus of control are inclined to take responsibility and proactively manage their activities to attain professional success.

An examination of the correlation between locus of control and salary satisfaction reveals a present yet nuanced relationship, emphasizing the variability and intricacy of factors influencing an individual's perception of their salary. This correlation is not absolute and is contingent on factors such as the specific context, the measurement of variables, and their evolution over time.

In today's society marked by escalating needs and higher aspirations, there is a discernible increase in the prevalence of external locus of control. Simultaneously, the desire for validation from others is gaining prominence, reflecting a nationwide trend in a culture where criticism and negativity appear to be on the rise.

The impact of these societal shifts on salary satisfaction is evident, resulting in a growing discontent with financial earnings. This trend can significantly shape the perception of the value of possessions and wages, indicating a tendency toward an external locus of control.

Comprehending the complexity of the interplay between locus of control and pay satisfaction is vital for developing effective organizational policies that consider individual diversity and adapt to the evolving dynamics of contemporary society.

References

American Psychological Association. (2015). *APA Dictionary of Psychology*. (G. R. VandenBos, Ed.) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Arakeri, S., & Sunagar, B. (2017). Locus of Control: Influence of Internality, Externality - Others, Externality - Chance among Management Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 4(2), 154-163.



Chen, J., & Silverthorne, C. (2008). The impact of locus of control on job stress, job performance and job satisfaction in Taiwan. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 29(7), 572-582. doi:10.1108/01437730810906326

Chernyshenko, O. S., & Stark, S. (2005). Organizational Psychology. În K. Kempf-Leonard (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Social Measurement* (pg. 957-963). Elsevier.

Cobb-Clark, D. A. (2015). Locus of control and the labor market. *IZA Journal of Labor Economics*, 4, 1-19. doi:10.1186/s40172-014-0017-x

Doron, R., & Parot, F. (2006). *Dictionary of Psychology*. Bucharest: Humanitas Publishing House.

Ekanayaka, E. H. (2021). The Effect of Locus of Control on Job Performance: An Empirical Study of Executive Level Employees in a Selected Sri Lankan Apparel Organization. *Sri Lankan Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11(2).

Katebi, A., HajiZadeh, M. H., Bordbar, A., & Salehi, A. M. (2022). The Relationship Between „Job Satisfaction” and „Job Performance”: A Meta-analysis. *Global J. Flex. Syst. Manag.*, 23, 21-32. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40171-021-00280-y>

Kundi, Y. M., Aboramadan, M., Elhamalawi, E. M., & Shahid, S. (2021). Employee psychological well-being and job performance: exploring mediating and moderating mechanisms. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 29(3), 736-754. doi:10.1108/IJOA-05-2020-2204

Ng, T. W., Sorensen, K. L., & Eby, L. T. (2006). Locus of control at work: a meta-analysis. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 27, 1057-1087. doi:10.1002/job.416

Rotter, J. B. (1966). Generalised expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement. *Psychological Monographs*, 609.

Schultz, D. (1986). *Theories of Personality* (3-rd edition). Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Shaw, J. D. (1999). Positive and negative affect, signal sensitivity, and pay satisfaction. *Journal of Management*, 189-205.

Spector, P. E. (1982). Behavior in organizations as a function of employee's locus of control. *Psychological Bulletin*, 9(3), 482-497. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.91.3.482

Strauser, D. R., Ketz, K., & Keim, J. (2002). The relationship between Self-efficacy, Locus of control and Work Personality. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 68, 20-26.

Zamfir, C. (2005). *The uncertainty. A psychosociological perspective*. Bucharest: Economic Publishing House.

Zlate, M. (1981). *Work psychology - interpersonal relations*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.