

Investigation into the Locus of Control and Self-Concept of Children From the Low Socioeconomic Level

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Abstract: This research aimed at examining whether the gender and the age of children from the low socioeconomic level created any difference at the level of their locus of control and their self-concept, or not and whether there is a relationship between children's self-concept and their locus of control, or not. In the research, a General Information Form, Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Locus of Control Scale were used. T-test was applied to determine the self-concept and the locus of control levels of children from the low socioeconomic level with regard to their gender. One Way Variance Analysis was used to assess their self-concept and locus of control levels with regard to the child's age and the Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine whether or not there is a relationship between children's self-concept levels and the locus of control levels. The results of the research revealed that the gender and the age of children caused a significant difference in the locus of control and self-concept levels of children ($p < 0.005$) and that there is a relationship between children's self-concept levels and the locus of control levels ($p < 0.001$).

Key words: Self-concept, locus of control, child, socioeconomic, investigation

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings and they are always in contact with other individuals in the society. Because of the relations or events that they go through, individuals may sometimes experience happiness and unhappiness or sadness other times. These experiences determine the reinforcers. Positive reinforcers, the results of which produce happiness, create a reward effect; whereas, negative reinforcers, the results of which produce sadness and unhappiness, create a punishment effect. An individual may perceive the existence of a power that controls these rewards and punishments either internally or externally. The source of this power is called the locus of control (Levy, 1976). According to the concept of the locus of control, those who believe that what happens to them is a result of their own actions are called individuals with internal locus of control and those who believe that what happens to them is a result of an external power such as luck, fate, stars or else are individuals with external locus of control (Arsoy and Magden, 1993). Individuals with internal locus of control believe that rewards result primarily from their own behaviour, capacities and efforts and these individuals are generally more self-reliant individuals who have high self-esteem levels and healthy personalities. On the contrary,

individuals with an external locus of control believe that rewards result primarily from luck, chance, fate or external forces regardless of their own behaviors and these individuals are generally self-distrusted and unhappy persons with low self-esteem levels who do not perceive and attribute value to themselves (Cüceloğlu, 1993). While individuals with internal locus of control believe that events and their consequences develop as a result of their own behaviour and acts, individuals with external locus of control cannot make correlations between the events and their own efforts and behaviour; and thus, they believe that occurrences stem from others' behaviour or happen accidentally (Nasser and abouchedid, 2006).

Factors such as gender differences, age, socioeconomic level of the families, attitude of parents towards children and academic achievement play a significant role in the development of locus of control (Cihangir, 1999). Gilford *et al.* (2006) in the light of the data obtained from three thousand university students, confirmed that the average grades of students with internal locus of control are at significantly higher level compared to those of with external locus of control.

The low socioeconomic level of the family and accordingly, limited physical possibilities play an important role in shaping the value prepositions and life perspectives of children. Children from the low

socioeconomic level household with limited physical possibilities may connect the troubles and difficulties they live through to luck or fate, in addition to interpreting them by means of coincidences. Children with external locus of control have less self-reliance because of the belief that they have no control over their environment and forces outside them affect the events and the outcomes and consequently, such children do not get to know their self-identity and may have low self-esteem.

Self-concept can be defined as the sum of the feelings and thoughts of individuals for themselves, a way of self-recognition and self-evaluation, the conscious self-perception of an individual and the subjective side of the personality. In other words, it is individuals' desire to understand themselves and others, the reflection of their existential loneliness, developmentally achieved independency and all perceptions, thoughts and feelings referred to for themselves. Children with high self-esteem are defined as individuals who are confident of their competencies and decisions. Such children actively participate in group discussions. They do not face any difficulties in building friendships, they are not shy and they can easily voice their opinions and express what they actually want to say. They believe that events are guided by their own decisions and acts. Children with low self-esteem have little confidence in themselves; they avoid expressing their opinions as they are afraid of criticism. Their level of anxiety is high. They continuously repress their anxiety and desires and they are authority-dependent. They believe that powerful others, fate or chance primarily determine the events and their consequences in their lives and hence, other people are influential in the lives of these children (Cihangir, 1999; Schoeneman and Rubanowitz, 1985).

Factors such as the gender, the age, the characteristics of parents, the attitude of parents and the socioeconomic level of the household are important in the development of self-concept. Studies carried out indicate that negative environmental conditions adversely affect the development of some personality characteristics of children, such as the self-concept and the locus of control (Öner, 1994; Büyüköztürk, 2002; Cüceloğlu, 1993; Yesilyaprak, 1988).

Children from the low socioeconomic level attribute their limited physical possibilities compared to their peers and the inadequate satisfaction of their needs to forces and events such as luck, coincidence and fate, which are far beyond their control and consequently, they perceive and feel that they are distrusted and disliked. Starting from this view, this study was carried out in order to examine whether variables such as gender and age create any differences in the self concept and the locus of control levels of children from the low

socioeconomic level and whether there is any correlation between children's self concept and locus of control levels.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The universe and the sampling: The research involved 200 children, attending the fourth and the fifth grades of primary school children at the age of ten to twelve and at the low socioeconomic level, from the province of Ankara. The primary schools were selected by way of random sampling from the neighbourhoods at the low socioeconomic level.

Instruments for data collecting: In the research, a General Information Form, Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Locus of Control Scale were used.

General information form: The general information form created by the researchers consists of questions related to the gender and the age of children and their parents' education levels.

Piers-harris children's self-concept scale: Piers and Harris developed this scale, which consists of eighty items, in 1964 for children at the age of nine to sixteen years old. The scale aims at assessing the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of children about themselves. The eighty defining items in the scale are replied by saying yes or no. The score that the child can receive is between zero and eighty. High scores show that individuals have positive feelings about themselves and low scores show that they have negative feelings about themselves. The measure can be applied individually or in groups. The validity and the reliability study of the scale was carried out by Öner (1994) and the validity and the reliability coefficients were found to be 0.72 and 0.92.

The locus of control scale: Nowicki and Strickland developed the Locus of Control Scale (LCS) in 1973, in order to assess the perception level of the internal and external locus of control of the reinforcements that control the behaviour. The items of the measuring instrument are about academic proficiency, social maturation, independence, coping with events and self-motivation. The items of the 40-questions scale are determined according to the compulsory selection method, which necessitates the marking of one of the yes or no responses. The yes or no statement within each item that is in the direction of external locus of control is assigned one point. Therefore, higher scores indicate external locus of control while lower scores are an indication of internal locus of control (Arıca, 1995; Yeilyaprak, 1988).

Conducted the reliability study of the Nowicki Strickland Locus of Control Scale. Yeilyaparak (1988) found the reliability coefficient as 0.87 when worked with the repeat of the test method and calculated it to be 0.71 by using the Kuder-Richardson 20 formula.

The analysis of the data: The data obtained were evaluated using the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) 10.0 software. T-test was applied to determine the self-concept and the locus of control levels of children from the low socioeconomic level with regard to their gender; One Way Variance Analysis was used to assess their self-concept and locus of control levels with regard to the child's age and the Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine whether or not there is a relation between children's self-concept levels and the locus of control levels. At the end of the one way variance analysis, the Scheffe test was used to determine which group caused the difference (Klommsten *et al.*, 2004).

RESULTS

This study was conducted with the objective of researching whether the variables such as gender and age create any differences in the self concept and the locus of control levels of children from the low socioeconomic level and whether there is any correlation between children's self concept and locus of control levels. When the parents of the children involved in the research were examined, it was observed that 82% of the mothers were primary school, 18% of the mothers were middle school, 73% of the fathers were primary school and 27% of the fathers were middle school graduates. The data about the children has been analysed and the results have been presented. They have been discussed with the support of the relevant literature.

As can be observed in Table 1, it was determined as a result of the t-test that there is a significant difference between the children's mean scores of both self concept [$t_{(214)} = 2.945$, $p < 0.005$] and locus of control [$t_{(214)} = 2.868$, $p < 0.005$] according to their gender.

As can be observed in Table 2, it was determined as a result of the variance analysis that there is a significant difference between the children's mean scores of both self concept ($F_{(2, 213)} = 37.891$, $p < 0.001$) and locus of control ($F_{(2, 213)} = 15.076$, $p < 0.001$) according to their gender. The Scheffe test conducted showed that the difference was due to ten year old children as well as the self concept and locus of control scores of both 11-year-old and 12-year-old children.

As can be observed in Table 3, there is a negative correlation between the self concept and the locus of control ($r = -.349$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 1: Self-concept and locus of control score averages, standard deviation by gender

Gender	n	Self concept		Locus of control	
		M	SD	M	SD
Male	88	57.27	16.18	15.78	4.32
Female	128	62.52	9.99	14.38	2.85

Means with different superscripts in the same column are statistically significantly different. $p < 0.005$

Table 2: Self-concept and locus of control score averages, standard deviation by children's age

Age	n	Self concept		Locus of control	
		M	SD	M	SD
10 ¹	15	46.00	18.07	19.53	0.98
11 ²	155	60.89	9.43	14.69	0.26
12 ³	46	62.59	14.09	14.32	0.49
General	216	60.38	13.10	14.95	0.24
Meaningful		1-2,1-3		1-2,1-3	

Means with different superscripts in the same column are statistically significantly different. $p < 0.001$

Table 3: Pearson correlation test results of self-concept and locus of control

Self concept	Pearson correlation	Locus of control
		0.349
	n	216

Means with different superscripts in the same column are statistically significantly different. $p < 0.001$

DISCUSSION

According to the results of this study, both self concept and locus of control levels of girls were found to be negative. Owing to the correlation between self concept and locus of control, this is an expected consequence. Parents' imposing stricter restrictions regarding life and hence exerting more pressure on girls, compared with boys, prevent the establishment of self-confidence and cause them to perceive themselves as incapable. Furthermore, girls adopt a sentimental, rather than logical, approach towards events when compared with boys and seek the reasons for events not in themselves but outside. Parallel to our findings, the results of Arıcak (1995)'s study, examining the correlation between aggressiveness, self esteem and locus of control, indicated that girls were more externally controlled when compared with boys and individuals with high self-esteem had more internal locus of control. Klomsten *et al.* (2004) found in their study on the effects of gender differences on physical self perception that boys had higher scores than girls. Another study by Schmalz and Davison (2006) indicated that boys have higher self perception than girls do. While many studies indicate that gender has no effect on the locus of control (Gültümser, 2003; Gilford *et al.*, 2006), this study determined that gender has an impact on the locus of control. This situation can be explained by the correlation between self concept and locus of control.

Internal locus of control increases as self perception rises. A study by Mc-Nulty and Bargen (1988) confirmed that gender creates difference on the locus of control.

In Table 2, it is observed that while children of twelve years of age have more positive self perception and have more internal locus of control than others do, as age increases self perception rises in a positive direction and children become more internally focused. This situation is believed to be caused by the increase in cognitive abilities as age increases and thus children's evaluating themselves more realistically (Cihangir, 1999). As a result of the studies, it was revealed that the locus of control became more internal and positive self perception increased in line with the increasing age (Tükel and Gök, 1996; Cihangir, 1999). The studies by Sherman (1984) and Korkut (1986) showed that the internal locus of control improved as the ages of the children increased.

As shown in Table 3, according to the result of this study, there is a correlation between the self concept and the locus of control. As the self concept improves and as children perceive themselves more positively, internal locus of control also increases. A study by Cihangir (1999), analyzing the relation between the locus of control and self esteem levels of children, indicated that children with internal locus of control have high self esteem levels. The results of the studies conducted by Washington (1989) and Sterbin and Rakow (1996) emphasized that those students who have internal locus of control also have high self esteem levels.

RECOMMENDATION

As a result of this research, which aimed at examining whether the gender and the age of children from the low socioeconomic level created any difference at the level of their locus of control and their self-concept, or not; and whether there is a relation between children's self-concept and their locus of control, or not, it was determined that the gender and the age of children caused a significant difference in the locus of control and self-concept levels of children ($p < 0.005$) and that there is a relationship between children's self-concept levels and the locus of control levels ($p < 0.001$).

In order for the self-concept and the locus of control, which constitute an important dimension of personality, to develop healthily, primarily parents should care for raising their children in a healthy family environment full of love, respect and security, considering the fact that the basics of the personality is established in the early years of life. It is important to set up healthy communication with children. The children who can establish healthy

communication have more confidence in themselves and thus, they have a higher degree of self control. Parents need to be aware that the most important emotional nutrient for the child is love, so they should provide their children with enough love and care.

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