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The impact of locus of control on workplace stress and job satisfaction. A pilot study on private-sector employees

Sindu Padmanabhan

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### **Highlights**

- The study focuses on the role of locus of control on work stress and job satisfaction among private-sector employees.
- The results of the study showed that employees with an internal locus of control were more likely to have higher job satisfaction.
- An elevated level of stress was found in every company and this, in turn, influences the job satisfaction of employees (Rose, 2003).
- Employees who are not content with their jobs may experience negative physical and mental health issues (Spector, 1997).
- The findings of the study also show that there exists a negative correlation between workplace stress and job satisfaction.

## **The impact of locus of control on workplace stress and job satisfaction. A pilot study on private-sector employees.**

Sindu Padmanabhan

*Ph.D. in Psychology, Department of Psychology*

Bharathiar University, India.

Ph: +919916395142, E-mail: divyasn@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

The current study was an attempt to investigate the role of locus of control on work stress and job satisfaction. To collect data, participants were selected purposively. A total of 65 respondents were selected. The work locus of control scale by Paul E. Spector, job satisfaction survey by Paul E. Spector, and workplace stress survey by The American Institute of Stress were used for the study. The findings indicate that there was no significant difference in work locus of control, job satisfaction, and workplace stress concerning gender. It was found that individuals with an internal locus of control are more likely to have higher job satisfaction. The data were analyzed using mean, S.D, Independent t-test, and Pearson's correlation coefficient. Results also showed that work locus of control and workplace stress was found positively correlated; work locus of control and job satisfaction were found negatively correlated; workplace stress and job satisfaction were negatively correlated.

**Keywords:** - Work Locus of control, Workplace Stress, Job Satisfaction. Private Sector employees.

### **1. Introduction**

Stress at work has been the headline of news stories and the talk of the day these days. It is a global phenomenon of contemporary lifestyles that our island is no exception to. Various studies show that intense job stress can harm workers' mental and physical health, which eventually leads to lower productivity, less job satisfaction, and less healthy employees. It is not possible to ignore the work stress within the company. A study conducted by Anderson shows that stress occurs in any organization high or low, and which in turn affects the overall job performance of the employees. For example, (Pickering,2001) notes that the effects of stress in the workplace can be very varied and along with poor results, including elevated illness, absence, and staff turnover. Moreover, tension has frequently been related to industrial sabotage.

Workers often produce mechanical failures on the assembly line to break the monotony and tension of their job. Job stress influences individual productivity as well. Rose states in her study that an elevated average level of stress is to be found in every company and at every level of management and staff, which mainly affects the work satisfaction of employees [6].

Employees who do not like their jobs can experience negative physical and mental health issues, according to Spector. As the latter is an indicator of low employee job satisfaction, each business would like to have the minimum rate of employee absenteeism. (Hellriegel, Slocum, and Woodman,1989) note that absenteeism is related to the degree of work satisfaction. (French,2003) states in his study that the high turnover rate of employees is caused by employee discontent with their workplace. Analysis conducted by (Steel and Ovalle,1984) showed that the relationship between work satisfaction and turnover is moderate, which suggests that less satisfied workers are more likely to leave their jobs. (Locke,1976) equates job satisfaction with staff morale. He states that workers with higher job satisfaction think that in the long run the company will be happy, care about the quality of their job, are more loyal to the organization, have higher retention rates, and are more productive.

Job satisfaction can be defined as a happy or optimistic emotional state that results from the assessment of one's work or work experiences. This positive feeling stems from the understanding of one's work as fulfilling or enabling one's significant job values to be met, provided that these values are consistent with one's needs. Provide that values apply to what one wishes or tries to accomplish a job. Hoppok & Spielgler describes job satisfaction as the interconnected collection of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that enable workers to admit that they are happy with their employment. Besides, the role of employees in the workplace is emphasized as there is an effect of different elements on an employee within the organization.

(Clark,1997) argues that if the employees are not content with the role assigned to them, they are not certain concerning factors such as their rights, working conditions are not safe, colleagues are not cooperative, not being valued by managers, and are not taken into account in the decision-making process, resulting in them feeling separate from the organization. Julian Rotter originated the Locus of Control as a theory in 1954. It calls people's propensity to think that power exists within them internally, or with others or the situation externally. People with an internal locus of influence assume that their initiative and ability are the product of the consequences of their actions. They think that hard work and personal skills would contribute to good results.

People with an external locus of control, on the other hand, believe that their actions do not affect future results and that the results of their actions depend on factors outside their control (Landy & Conte, 2004; Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki & McNamara, 2005). Findings from the research show that an internal control locus is correlated with job satisfaction and an external control locus with job dissatisfaction. Internals who attribute performance to events under their control experience more job satisfaction than people who think they have no control over events that determine their performance. Most of the elements that determine the satisfaction of employees, except for opportunities to express

one's ability, recognition, and variety of tasks. Regardless of the nature of the work, interns tend to have higher job satisfaction due to the way they perceive them.

## **2. Research Questions**

- a. Does work locus of control affect job satisfaction?
- b. Does work locus of control affect workplace stress?
- c. Does work stress affect job satisfaction?
- d. Do males and females have a different locus of control, work stress, and job satisfaction?

To answer the above research question, the following objectives have been developed in achievable terms.

## **3. Objectives**

- a. To study and compare workplace stress, job satisfaction, and work locus of control on private-sector employees.
- b. To study and compare workplace stress, job satisfaction, and locus of control on male and female employees
- c. To study the correlation between workplace stress, job satisfaction, and work locus of control on private-sector employees.

To achieve the above objectives, the following hypotheses are generated to be tested.

## **4. Hypotheses**

- H<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant difference between males and females with regards to their workplace stress, job satisfaction, and work locus of control.
- H<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant correlation between workplace stress, job satisfaction, and work locus of control
- H<sub>3</sub>: There is no significant relationship between locus of control and job satisfaction.

## **5. Methodology**

The present study was carried on 65 employees of private sector organizations, (34 males & 31 females) who were selected purposively. At first, participants were informed about the purpose of the study. A set of questionnaires were provided. The participants were requested to read each statement and express their feelings by putting on tick marks at the appropriate point.

## 6. Tools Used

The Job Satisfaction Survey, by Paul E. Spector (JSS), is a 36-item, nine-facet scale to assess employee attitudes about the job and aspects of the job. A summated rating scale format is used, with six choices per item ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

The Work Locus of Control Scale by Paul E. Spector (WLCS) is a 16-item instrument designed to assess control beliefs in the workplace, that is, whether a person believes he or she can control events at work or whether control resides in others. The format is summated rating with six response choices: disagree very much, disagree moderately, disagree slightly, agree slightly, agree moderately, agree very much, scored from 1 to 6, respectively.

Workplace Stress Survey by The American Institute of Stress is a 10-item scale design to assess work-related stress. The format is summated rating with three response choices: you. strongly disagree. agree somewhat. strongly agree.

## 7. Research Variables

The present research is a relational study that considered the principles of applied research and is based on three variables namely - work locus of control, workplace stress, and job satisfaction.

## 8. Result & Discussion

The statistical tests used to analyze the data are Mean, S.D., independent t-test, and Pearson product-moment correlation  $r'$ . IBM SPSS was used for statistical analysis. First, Independent t-tests were conducted to evaluate  $H_1$ .

Table A.1: Independent t-test results comparing males and females on work locus of control.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Male	34	40.94	11.086	.336	63	.369
Female	31	40.06	9.822			

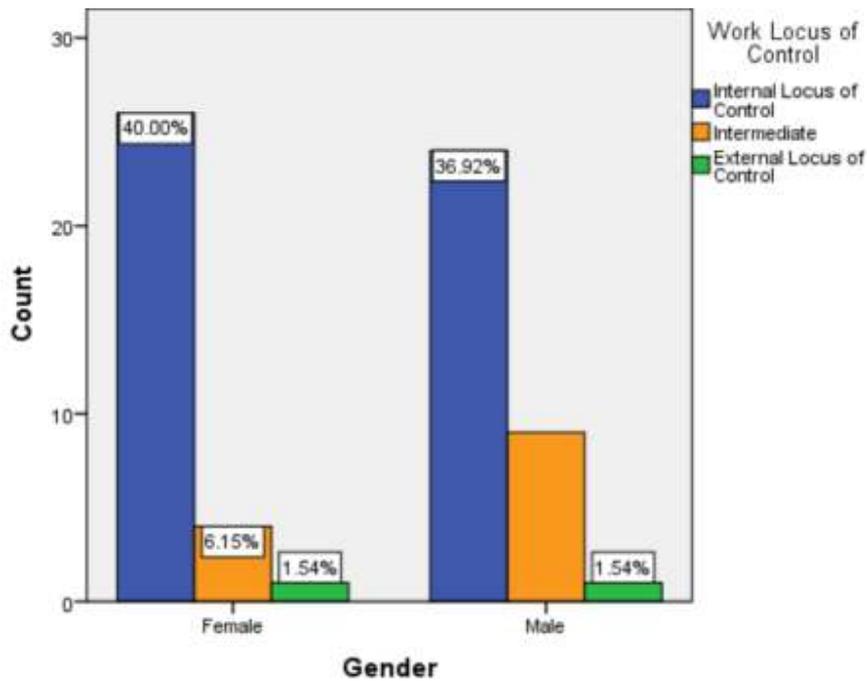


Fig.1: Percentage distribution of work locus of control in female and male employees.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare work locus of control in females and males (see Table A.1). There was no significant difference in the score for male ( $M = 40.94$ ,  $S.D = 11.086$ ) and female ( $M = 40.06$ ,  $S.D = 9.822$ ) conditions;  $t(63) = .336$ ,  $p = .369$ , which is not significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female employees concerning work locus of control.

Table A.2: Independent t-test results comparing males and females on job satisfaction.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Male	34	153.15	27.467	.055	63	.478
Female	31	152.77	27.124			

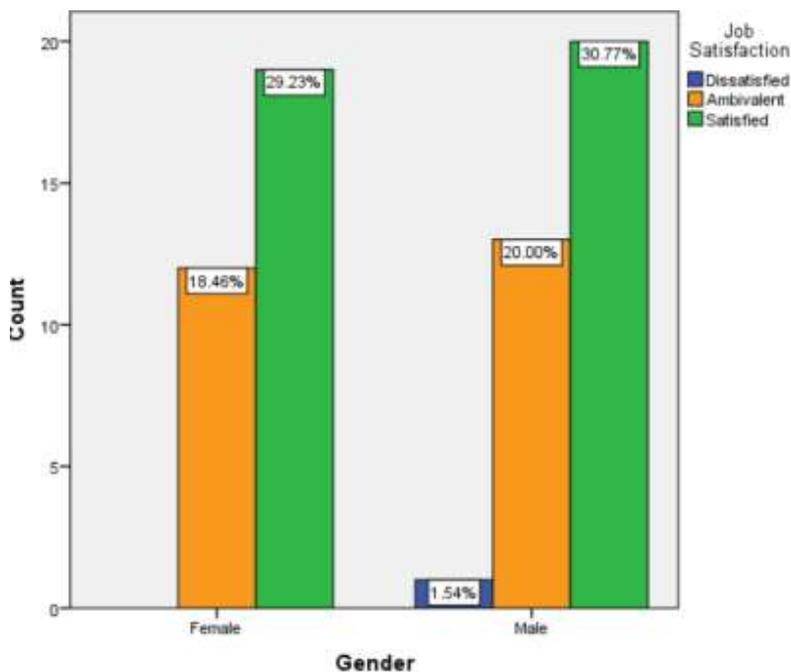


Fig 2: Percentage distribution of job satisfaction in female and male employees.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare job satisfaction in females and males (see Table A.2). There was no significant difference in the score for male ( $M = 153.15$ ,  $S.D = 27.467$ ) and female ( $M = 152.77$ ,  $S.D = 27.124$ ) conditions;  $t(63) = .055$ ,  $p = .478$ , which is not significant at 0.05 level. This indicates that there is no significant difference between male and female employees with regards to Job Satisfaction.

Table A.3: Descriptive statistical reports of subscales in Job satisfaction.

	Percentage Distribution		
	Dissatisfied	Ambivalent	Satisfied
Pay	30.8	32.3	36.9
Promotion	9.2	46.2	44.6
Supervision	6.2	18.5	75.4
Fringe Benefits	27.7	33.8	38.5
Contingent Rewards	18.5	32.3	49.2
Operating Conditions	30.8	41.5	27.7
Coworkers	3.1	20.0	76.9
Nature of Work	3.1	32.3	64.6
Communication	10.8	26.2	63.1

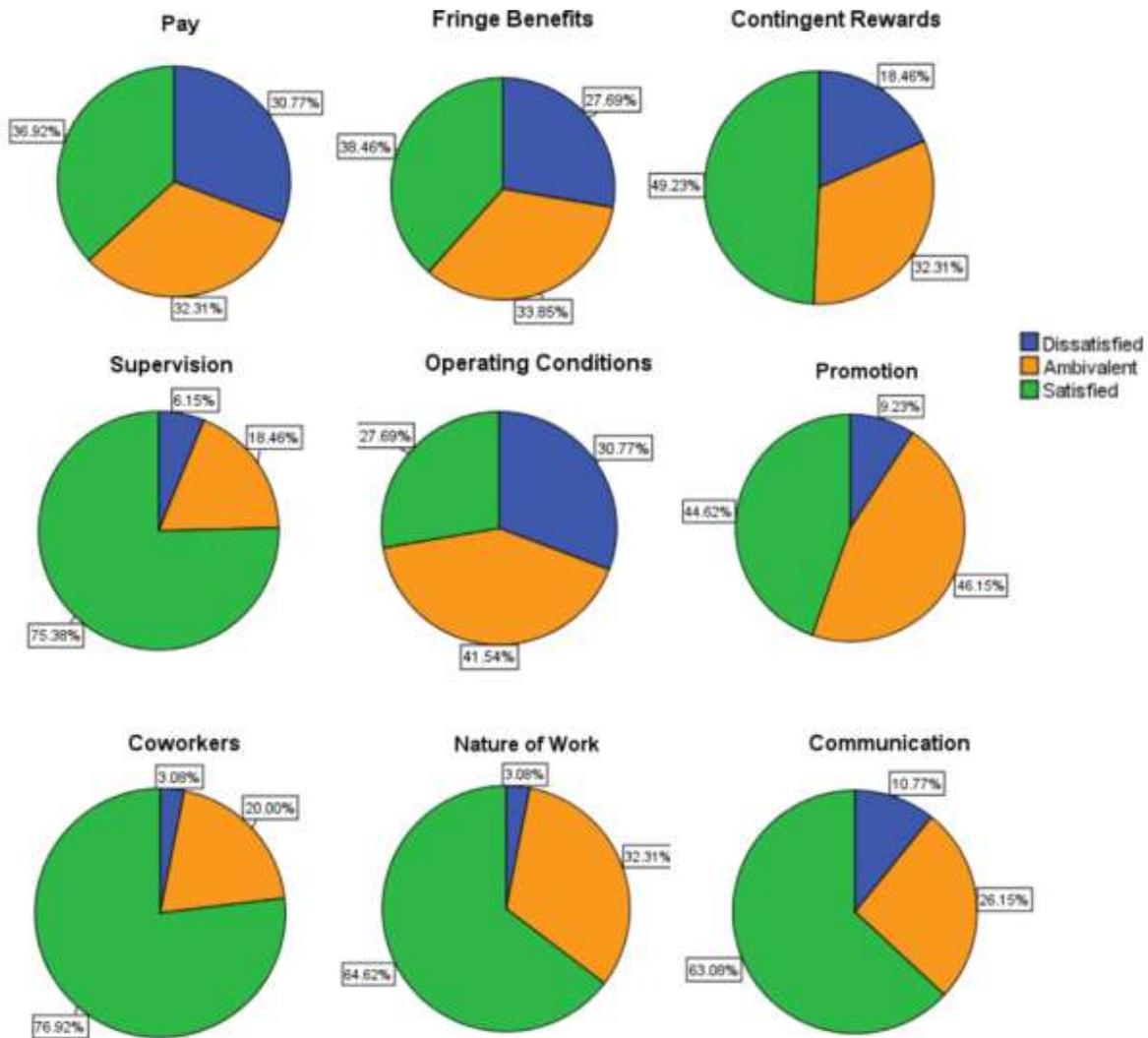


Fig.3: Percentage distribution of level of satisfaction for each subscale of job satisfaction.

Table A.3 and Figure 3 show the descriptive statistical analysis report and percentage distribution of different subscales of job satisfaction measured in the employees respectively. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare workplace stress in females and males (see Table A.4).

Table A.4: Independent t-test results comparing males and females on workplace stress.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Male	34	39.06	19.204	-.159	63	.437

Female	31	39.77	16.798
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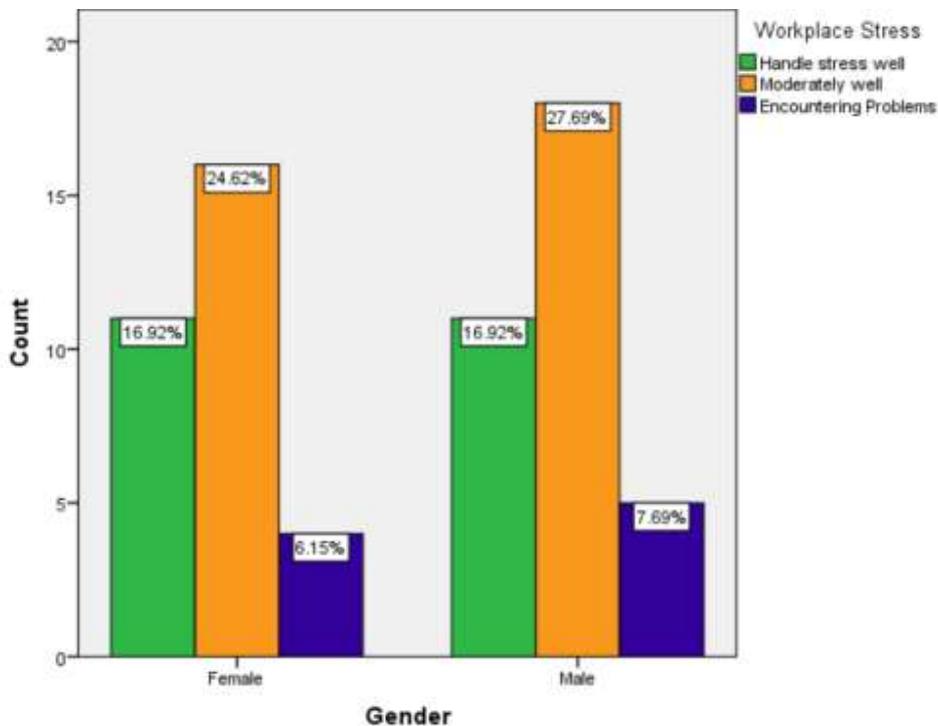


Fig.4: Percentage distribution of workplace stress in female and male employees.

There was no significant difference in the score for male ( $M = 39.06$ ,  $S.D = 19.204$ ) and female ( $M = 39.77$ ,  $S.D = 16.798$ ) conditions;  $t(63) = -.159$ ,  $p = .437$ , which is not significant at 0.05 level (Table A.4). This indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female employees with regards to workplace stress.

These results indicate that there is no significant difference between male and female employees with regards to their work locus of control, job satisfaction, and workplace stress.

### **Correlation between the study variables – Work locus of control, Job satisfaction, and Workplace stress.**

To measure the relationship between the variables used in the study, Pearson's  $r$  parametric test of correlation was computed to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between the study variables. Pearson's test of correlation was conducted to evaluate  $H_2$ .

The value of  $r$  in Table A.5 represents the statistical reports generated on computing Pearson's correlation coefficient among the variables- work locus of control, job satisfaction, and workplace stress. The correlation strength is weak if the value of  $r$  ranges from 0 to 0.2 and strong if the values range from 0.3 to 1.

Table A.5: Correlation between work locus of control, job satisfaction, and workplace stress

Variables	N= 65		Correlation <i>r</i>			<i>p</i>		
	Mean	S.D	Work Locus of Control	Job Satisfaction	Workplace Stress	Work Locus of Control	Job Satisfaction	Workplace Stress
<b>Work Locus of Control</b>	40.52	10.430	1	-.631**	.142	.000		.259
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>	152.97	27.091	-.631**	1	-.151	.000		.230
<b>Workplace Stress</b>	39.40	17.960	.142	-.151	1	.259	.230	

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

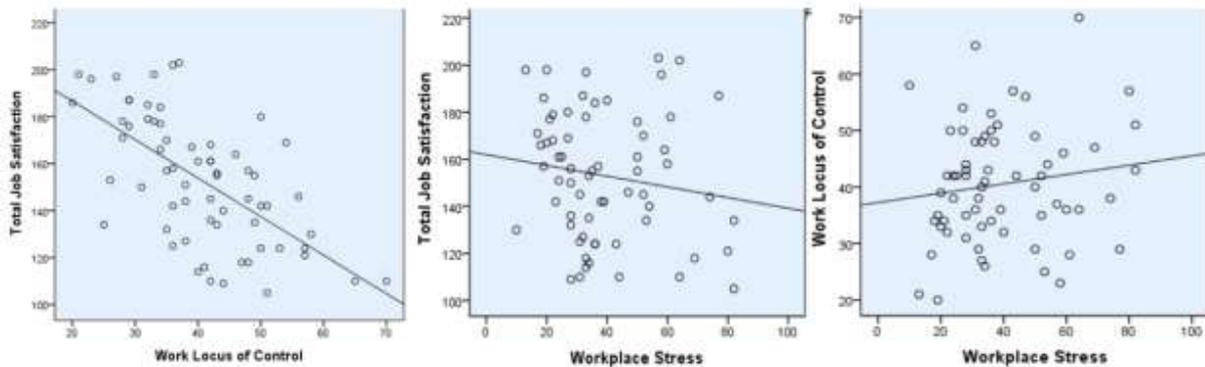


Fig.5: Pearson product-moment correlation scatter plots comparing Work locus of control, Total job satisfaction, and workplace stress.

Table A.5 shows that there was a strong negative correlation between work locus of control and job satisfaction,  $r = -.631$ ,  $p < .001$ . There was a weak positive correlation between work locus of control and workplace stress,  $r = .142$ ,  $p = .259$ . There was a weak negative correlation between job satisfaction and workplace stress,  $r = -.151$ ,  $p = .230$ . An independent t-test was conducted to evaluate  $H_3$ .

Table A.6: Independent t-test results comparing internal and external locus of control on Job Satisfaction.

	Work Locus of Control	N	Mean	SD	t	df	<i>p</i>
Job Satisfaction	Internal Locus of Control	50	158.52	26.250	3.231	63	.001
	External Locus of Control	15	134.47	21.597			

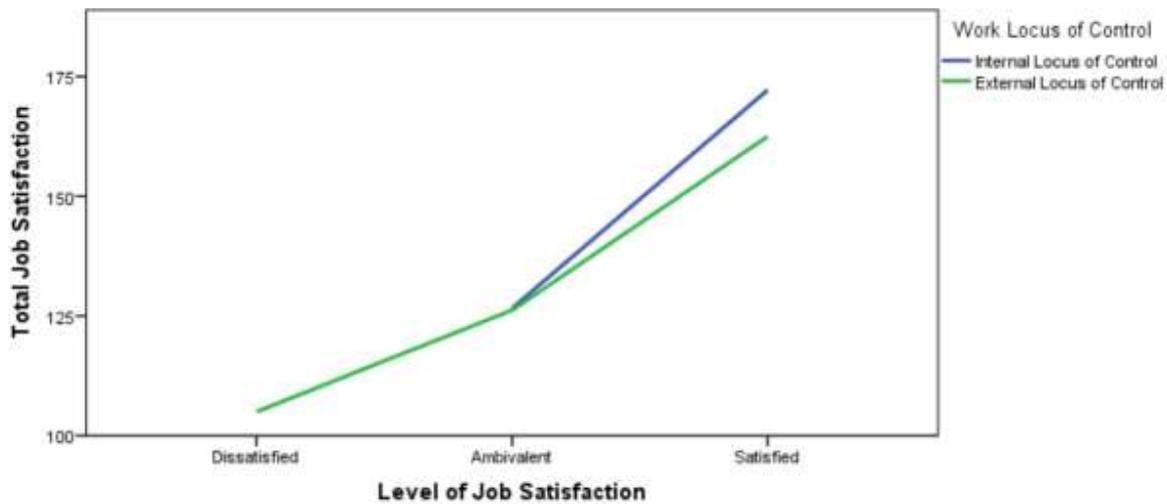


Fig.6: Level of job satisfaction in Internal locus of control and external locus of control group employees.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare Job Satisfaction in an internal and external locus of control groups (see Table A.6). There was significant difference in the score for internal locus of control ( $M = 158.52$ ,  $S.D = 26.250$ ) an external locus of control ( $M = 134.47$ ,  $S.D = 21.597$ ) conditions;  $t(63) = 3.231$ ,  $p = .001$ , which is significant at 0.05 level. Figure 6 clearly shows that employees with an internal locus of control had a higher level of job satisfaction. This indicates that there is a significant difference between work locus of control with regards to Job Satisfaction ( $H_3$ ).

## 9. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that work locus of control is positively correlated with workplace stress; and job satisfaction is negatively correlated with workplace stress and work locus of control. There was no significant difference in workplace stress, job satisfaction, and work locus of control with gender. The results indicate that employees with an internal locus of control reported higher job satisfaction when compared to employees with an external locus of control. The present study was conducted on employees in private sector organizations. It can be further suggested that this study can be conducted on a larger population to establish greater generalizability of these findings.

### **Ethical Standards**

The author asserts that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant national and institutional committees on human experimentation and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2008. The authors assert that all procedures contributing to this work comply with the ethical standards of the relevant national and institutional guides on the care and use of laboratory animals.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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Graphical Abstract

