

Abstract

The goal of this study was to examine how locus of control affects diet quality, stress levels, and resilience.

- We hypothesized that individuals with an external locus of control would have poorer diet quality, higher stress levels, and lack resilience compared to those with an internal locus of control.
- Data was collected via an anonymous online survey that was shared through social media platforms and analyzed using Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.
- Key findings of our study:
 - People with an external locus of control showed a significant correlation to eating packaged and fast foods over leafy greens.
 - People with an external locus of control were positively correlated with feeling debilitating stress and nervousness, and experiencing depression.
 - People with an internal control who reported they felt that they were on top of things and could take charge of their lives were positively correlated with eating fruits and successfully dealing with life events.
 - These findings highlight the relationship an external locus of control has on well-being.

Introduction

Previous research demonstrates the effects of internal and external locus of control on stress and dietary behaviors.

- Those with a stronger internal locus of control are more likely to engage in health-related behaviors such as exercise, avoiding fat intake, eating fiber, and regular tooth brushing (Steptoe & Wardle, 2001).
- Obese individuals, regardless of sex, tend to exhibit an external locus of control, believing that their health outcomes are due to fate or other external factors (Neymotin & Nemzer, 2014).
- In terms of stress, individuals with a greater external locus of control displayed elevated stress levels in the workplace (Chandra & Yagnik, 2022).
- Individuals with an internal locus of control were positively correlated with awareness and attitude, psychological status, health behaviors, and better hygiene. Those with an external control showed unhealthy dietary habits, high stress levels, and low resilience (Dogonchi et al., 2022).
- People with an internal locus of control are more likely to eat healthy foods, cope with stress in a healthier way, and have more resilience (Ababei et al., 2024).

Methods and Demographic

There were a total of 303 respondents in our survey titled Diet Quality and Emotional Intelligence. A series of 60+ questions with answer types such as Yes/No, Quantitative, and Qualitative were included. However, the majority of questions were quantitative.

Anonymous Online Google Form (303 Total Responses):

Age Ranges:

- 18-29: 277 participants
- 30-39: 10 participants
- 40-49: 5 participants
- 50+: 10 participants

Region:

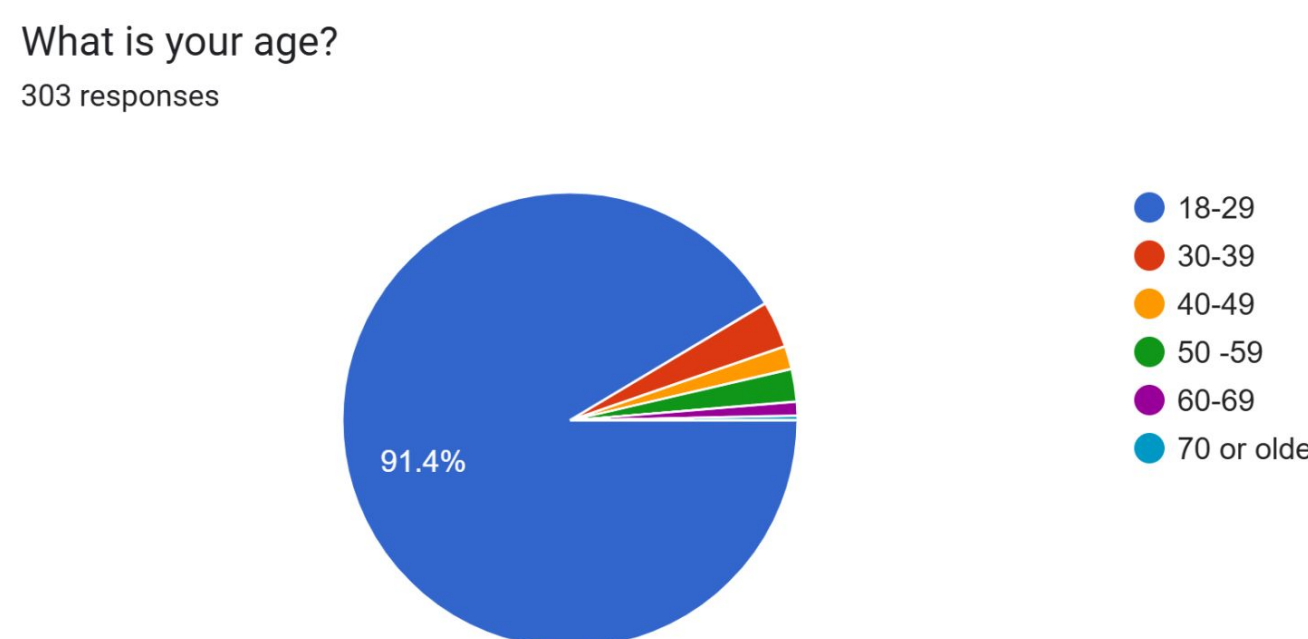
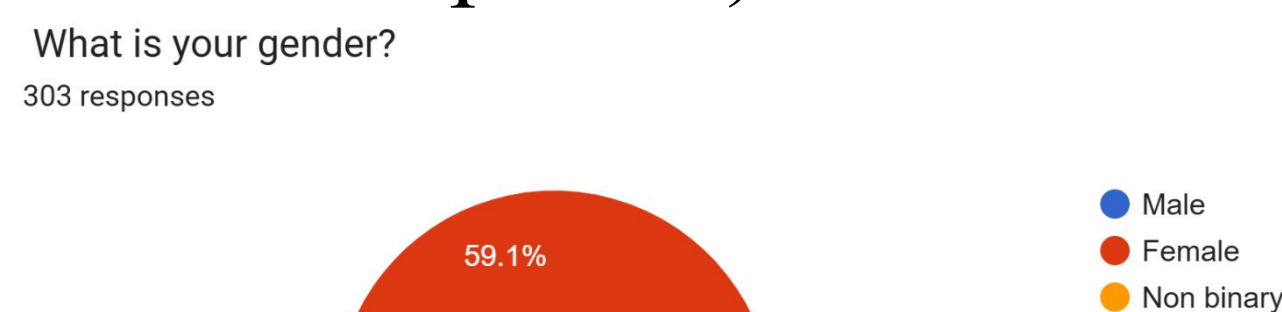
- North America (majority): 285

Gender:

- Male: 123
- Female: 179

Highest Completed Education:

- High School: 197
- Two or four year college: 90
- Master's: 11



Results

$p < 0.05 = *$ $p < 0.01 = **$

Table 1. Locus of Control and Diet Relationship

Relationship	Pearson Coefficient
Feeling like you can't change your health and consuming dark green leafy vegetables	-.274**
Feeling like you can't control important things in your life and consuming packaged and fast foods	.191**
Feeling like you are on top of things and consuming fruits	.184**

Table 2. Locus of Control and Stress Relationship

Relationship	Pearson Coefficient
Feeling like one is unable to control the important things in their life and how often they feel stressed and nervous.	.447**
Feeling like one is unable to control the important things in their life and how strongly they believe that stress is negative and should be avoided	.178**

Table 3. Locus of Control and Resilience Relationship

Relationship	Pearson Coefficient
Feeling like one is unable to control the important things in their life and feeling so depressed that nothing can cheer them up	.503**
Feeling that stress improves health and vitality and bouncing back after hard times	.152**
Feeling like one is unable to control the important things in their life and bouncing back after hard times	-.220**

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion:

- Our findings are consistent with the research of Chandra and Yagnik (2022), who explored the relationship between perceived stress and locus of control.
- The results were reflective of Dogonchi et al's (2022) study that showed an external locus of control displayed higher stress levels as well as lower resilience.
- Our results show similarities with a study by Ababei et al (2024), which reported that participants with a more internal locus of control exhibited healthier diet behaviors and lifestyles.

In Conclusion:

- Internal and external locus of controls significantly influence certain aspects of diet, such as external locus of control leading to unhealthy eating habits.
- Those with an external locus of control have a harder time coping with stress.

Future Work and Limitations

Future Work:

- Understanding a person's childhood and other personal factors (such as current occupation) could yield a better understanding of the reason behind one's locus of control.
- An Eastern diet was positively correlated with eating more vegetables and coping with stress more healthily than a Western diet. Does this suggest that non-Western people are more likely to have an internal locus of control than Western people?

Limitations:

- Our survey received 303 responses, a larger sample size would be more ideal for future research.
- Responses were self-reported.
- Respondents were primarily from the same age range.

References and Acknowledgements



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