

LOCUS OF CONTROL, COPING MECHANISMS OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS DURING THE NEW NORMAL AND THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: BASES FOR A GAD INTERVENTION ACTIVITY

Dr. Herminia N. Falsario¹, Dr. Susie Hope R. Tomol¹,

Mrs. Jenny N. Sedano¹, Dr. Ely S. Ciasico¹

¹ Faculty, Teacher Education Program, ISAT U Miagao Campus, Miagao, Iloilo

ABSTRACT

The study determined the locus of control of male and female education students, their coping mechanisms in the new normal and their academic performance. The study was conducted in the First Semester of AY 2020-2021. Correlational descriptive survey method was employed with mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage, rank and Pearson's r as the statistical instruments. Ninety seven students who filled up and sent back the questionnaires served as respondents of the study. The fully adapted questionnaires on locus of control and coping mechanisms were used in the study. Classified as to curricular program, there were sixteen BEED and eighty one BSED students. Classified as to sex, sixteen were males and eighty one were females. As to locus of control as a whole and when classified as to curricular program and sex, the respondents had both internal and external locus of control which implies that they attributed their success or failure to both internal and external factors. So, they have the psychological equilibrium. The top five coping mechanisms of the respondents as a whole were "wishful thinking", "emphasizing the positive", "self-blame", "problem focused coping" and "seeking social support". As to curricular program, the top five coping mechanisms of the Bachelor of Elementary Education students were "emphasizing the positive", "wishful thinking", "seeking social support", "problem focused coping" and "self-blame". The top five coping mechanisms of the Bachelor of Secondary Education students were "wishful thinking", "emphasizing the positive", "self-blame", "problem focused coping" and "seeking social support". When classified as to sex, the top five coping mechanisms of the males were "wishful thinking", "emphasizing the positive", "problem focused coping", "self-blame", and "self-isolation." For the females, the top five coping mechanisms were "wishful thinking", "emphasizing the positive", "self-blame", "seeking social support", and "problem focused coping". The top five coping mechanisms of the respondents are similar; but they differ in rank when classified as to sex and curricular program. They used more of positive coping mechanisms than the negative ones. As to academic performance, the respondents had "Very Good" rating in the upper bracket of 85 to 90 as a whole and as to curricular program and sex, but it still needs enhancement. There was no significant association between locus of control and academic performance. Based on the results of the study, an intervention activity will be proposed by the Office of the Gender and Development in coordination with the Guidance and Counselling Center of the University.

Key words: *locus of control, coping mechanism, academic performance, BEED and BSED students*

Introduction

Background of the Study

In Psychology, the actions of human beings are influenced by both their inner and outer worlds. The inner world is composed of their motivations, beliefs, perceptions, and natural make up or nature. On the other hand, their outer world is composed of their kind of family, and cultural milieu: their nurture environment. Specifically, the individual's success or failure could be attributed to their locus of control which could be internal or external. Locus of control is a generalized expectancy people hold regarding the degree to which they can control their own fate; it is an attitude that refers to a generalized expectancy about the extent to which reinforcements are under internal or external control.

As stated by Cetinkalp (2010) in his research titled "The Relationship Between Academic Locus of Control and Achievement Goals among Physical Education Teaching Program Students", the locus of control (LOC) is an important variable

that explains individual differences. The structure of locus of control is based on Rotter's social learning theory defending that individuals display a dispersion pattern on the dimensions of internal and external locus of control depending on the degree of their perceptions, on their responsibilities. Individuals with an internal locus of control (ILOC) believe that the outcomes of events to be internally controllable. In other words, they believe that their own personal efforts, behaviors, or skills will influence and determine outcomes and they take responsibility for their actions. Research has supported a positive relationship between internal locus of control and motivation and achievement in school. On the contrary, individuals with an external locus of control (ELOC) believe that their behaviors or the events they experience are more determined by external forces rather than by themselves. They believe and behave as if forces beyond their control such as chance, luck, or others with greater power represent the important factors in determining the occurrence of reinforcing events.

In Philosophy, Existentialism advocates that the individuals have the freedom of choice and they are responsible of their own actions which could lead to either success or failure. They have the control over the circumstances in their lives as stated in the poem "Invictus" *"I am the captain of my fate and the master of my soul."* In contrary, Behaviorism asserts that individuals have no freedom of choice. All the circumstances in their lives are dependent on their cultural milieu or external stimuli. As stated *"We are what we are and we do what we do, not because of any mysterious power of human volition, but because outside forces over which we lack any semblance of control have us caught in an inflexible web. Whatever else we may be, we are not the captains of our fate, or the masters of our soul."*

In an academic environment, locus of control refers to the way the students account personal successes or failures in school. The researchers wanted to find out the locus of control of the teacher education students and their coping mechanisms during the new normal. They believed that the results of the study will shed light on how the teacher education students account for their academic achievement. So, the study was conducted.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

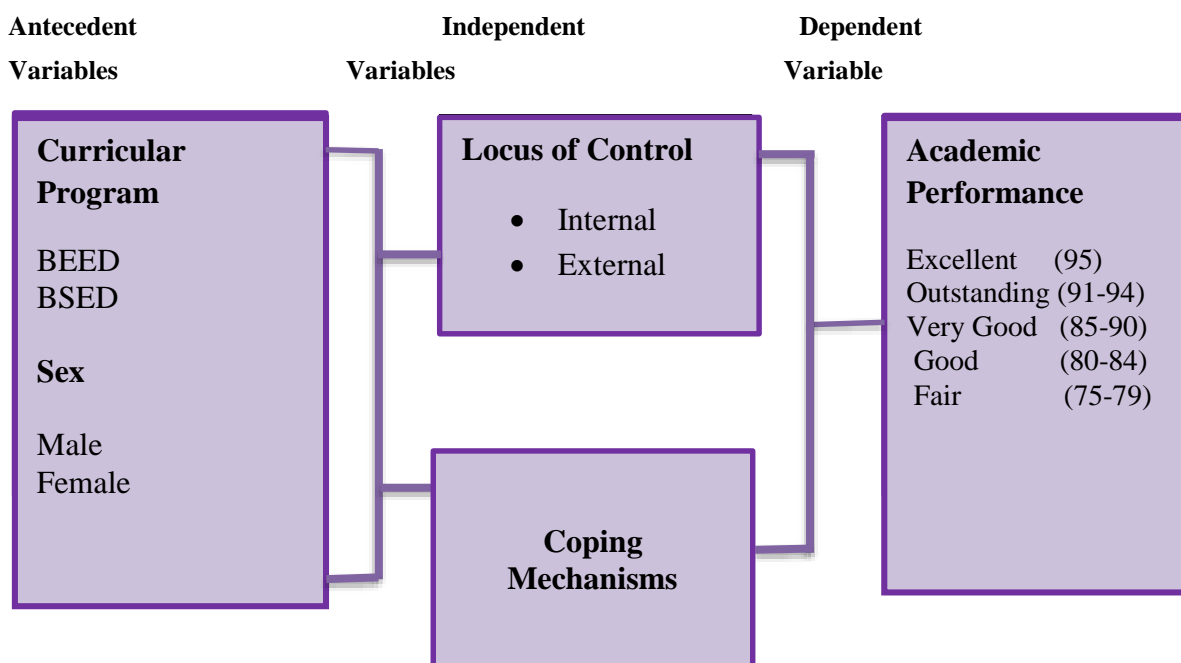


Figure 1 : Paradigm of the Study

The Paradigm of the Study presents the relationship of the variables in the study. The antecedent variables are the Curricular Program such as Bachelor of Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education and Sex which are Male and Female. The independent variables are Locus of Control which can Internal or External and Coping Mechanism. The dependent variables is Academic Performance described as Excellent, Outstanding, Very Good, Good and Fair.

Statement of the Problem

1. What is the percentage distribution of the respondents as to curricular program and sex?
2. What is the locus of control of the respondents as a whole and when classified as to their curricular program and sex?
3. What are the top five most preferred coping mechanisms of the respondents as a whole and when classified as to their curricular program and sex.?

4. What is the academic performance of the respondents as a whole and when categorized as to their curricular program and sex?
5. Is there a significant association between locus of control and academic performance?
6. What GAD Intervention Activity can be proposed based on the results of the study?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant association between locus of control and academic performance?

Literature Review

Various studies have been conducted about the locus of control and coping mechanisms of teacher education students. The findings of these studies showed that there are many factors associated with student's locus of control and coping mechanism. Reviewed in this section are some studies which have direct bearing on the present study on the locus of control and coping mechanism.

Locus of Control

An individual's locus of control (LOC) is what he or she believes will control the outcome of an event (Rotter, 2015). Rotter conceptualized LOC as sub constructs that fall along a continuum for the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (RIES; 2002). One side of the continuum describes internality. Internality is the belief that the individual determines an outcome. The other side of the continuum describes externality, which is the belief that outside sources determine an outcome (Rotter, 2015). The two sides of the continuum are illustrated by looking at why an individual believes that he or she received a job promotion. An individual might think that he or she received the promotion because of qualifications (internal) or because a boss liked him or her (external).

Though this appears to be a valid conceptualization of LOC, it presents a number of problems. The first problem is externality's ambiguity. To describe an individual as external is to say that he or she believes that any outside source determines the outcome of an event. The outside source could be another individual, luck, or god. It is impossible to distinguish these varying views when externality is treated as a single subconstruct.

Another problem with Rotter's conceptualization of LOC (2015) is that an individual can hold multiple views of what determines an outcome. For example, an individual may believe that he or she received a job promotion because his or her abilities (internal) placed the individual in the right place at the right time (external). By treating LOC as dependent traits on a continuum, results seen in the example will not accurately portray the individual's beliefs. The individual in the example may score towards the middle of the continuum despite very strong, but opposing, beliefs.

As a result of these and other criticisms, Levenson created a different conceptualization of LOC for the Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance (IPC) scale (2002). Levenson conceptualized LOC as three independent sub constructs. The first of these sub constructs is internality. The first sub construct, powerful others, is the belief that another individual has control over the outcome of an event. The second subconstruct, chance, is the belief that chance or luck controls the outcome of an event (Levenson, 2012). By splitting externality into two sub constructs, the problem of externality's ambiguity is solved.

Coping Mechanism

Coping refers to how an individual consciously responds to stress (Cramer, 2013). It was initially described as two, independent sub constructs (e.g., Ways of Coping; Folkman et al., 2005). The first sub construct, problem-focused coping, includes cognitions and behaviors that act to alter or resolve stress. An example of a problem-focused behavior is planning. The second sub construct is emotion-focused coping and includes cognitions and behaviors that attenuate the negative emotions of a stress. A behavioral example of emotion-focused coping is venting (Folkman et al., 2005).

A criticism of early measures of coping is that they only measured positive forms of coping. However, some individuals will respond to stress in a nonproductive way. This led to the creation of a third sub construct known as avoidant or maladaptive coping in measures such as the Coping Strategy Index (CSI; Amirkhan, 2009). Maladaptive coping is any behavior or cognition that serves to escape from, but not resolve, a stress. This includes behaviors such as substance use (Amirkhan, 2009; Carver et al. 2014).

The previous descriptions of coping used broad categories of behaviors and cognitions. This may be an inaccurate approach to measuring coping style. An individual may choose behaviors or cognitions that belong to different sub constructs to deal with a single stress. Additionally, each sub construct contains behaviors that rely on one's self or on another individual to deal with stress. This criticism led to the construction of the COPE Inventory (the COPE; Carver et al., 2014), which focuses on the specific behaviors that an individual chooses to manage stress. The COPE measures fifteen independent and distinct behaviors and cognitions. Each of the acts described in the COPE can be placed into one of the three broad categories of coping and include planning (problem-focused coping), use of other for emotional support (emotion-focused coping), and substance use (maladaptive coping) (Carver et al., 2014).

One area of debate in coping research has been whether to employ coping as a situational or dispositional construct. Coping was originally a situational construct (Folkman et al., 2005), but repeating the same situation for the same individual will not elicit the same coping strategy (Suls et al., 2008). This matches my expectation, as an individual will learn from experience what works or does not work in a given situation. However, an individual's coping strategy is related to stable personality traits: neuroticism is positively correlated with maladaptive coping; conscientiousness is positively correlated with problem-based coping; and extraversion is positively correlated with problem-based coping (Watson et al., 2016). If an individual's method of coping changes between each presentation of a similar situation, it would be unlikely for such trends to exist. What coping's relation to stable personality traits suggests is that coping can be measured both in a specific situation and as a dispositional trait. The only difference between measuring situational and dispositional coping is the frame of reference (Carver et al., 2014).

Relative Empirical Findings in Locus of Control and Coping Mechanism

The relationship between LOC and sex has been tested in the literature. The expected trend is that males should have a more internal LOC, while females should have a more external LOC. This is based on the belief that males are more independent than females. However, the literature has not consistently proven this trend. Levenson noted that males had a more external LOC than females (Levenson, 2012). Cairns and his colleagues noted the opposite, that males have a more internal LOC than females (Cairns et al., 2010). The predominant trend in the literature is that males have a more internal LOC than females (Chubb et al., 2011).

The inconsistent findings on LOC and sex could be the result of many different factors. Some believe that too little research exists to reveal a trend (Archer et al., 2008). Others believe that many of the studies are no longer pertinent because they were performed prior to the 1980s (Chubb et al., 2011). Both of these suggest that the solution is to perform current research with a modern population. Another possibility can be seen from interpreting other findings on LOC in the literature. As individuals grow older, they hold a stronger belief in an internal LOC (Blanchard-Fields et al., 2002; Cairns et al., 2006). Since females mature physically before males, females might shift towards a more internal LOC earlier. This has not been tested in the literature. A final source of the inconsistent findings could be the sample's power. Each sex could be highly variable in its views of LOC and consequently would require a larger population to obtain the expected results. Cairns and his colleagues used a large and balanced sample to measure the beliefs of LOC to report that males are more internal than females (Cairns et al., 2006).

In contrast to the findings on LOC and sex, the findings on coping and sex have been relatively consistent. The expected trend is that males prefer problem-focused coping and females prefer emotion-focused coping because males deal with a different set of stresses than females. The different stresses that each sex experience requires different coping responses. Folkman and Lazarus found that males are more likely to use problem-based coping than females (2005). Carver later noted strong gender preferences for specific coping behaviors (2014). Females are more likely to focus on and vent emotions and to seek support for both instrumental and emotional reasons. Males, on the other hand, are more likely to use drugs and alcohol to cope (Carver et al., 2014). The sex differences that Carver and his colleagues observed also suggest that males rely on themselves to cope with stress, while females rely on others.

Though the findings on sex and coping have been consistent, the strengths of these findings have varied with the different conceptualizations of coping. In Folkman and Lazarus' study (2005), each sub construct was a broad category of behaviors and cognitions. This approach reported moderate to weak sex differences. As previously stated, individuals may choose behaviors that are part of both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping to deal with a single stress. Consequently, a more similar mean between sexes is expected for each of these sub constructs. Carver and his colleagues' study (2014) strengthen the criticism of grouping behaviors into broad categories by reporting strong gender preferences in specific coping behaviors (Carver et al., 2014).

The literature has also found a relationship between LOC and coping. The relationship is believed to exist because the control an individual has over a stress determines how to manage a stress. In a situation where an individual has little control, it is more beneficial to attenuate negative emotions rather than trying to resolve the stress (Lazarus, 2005). Findings in the literature support this claim, as individuals with a more internal LOC rely on problem-based coping, while individuals with an external LOC rely on emotion-based coping (Folkman et al., 2005; Parkes, 2009). LOC and coping's relationship has also been observed through specific situations relating to health. The reporting of psychological symptoms, a form of emotion-focused coping, has been negatively correlated with an internal LOC (Petrosky et al., 2012).

Most of the literature has related LOC to broad categories of coping behaviors and cognitions. One of the few exceptions is Carver and his colleague's study using the COPE (2001), which treats coping as specific behaviors. For this study, the previously mentioned RIES was used. An internal LOC was positively correlated with active coping, planning, and positive reinterpretation and growth. An internal locus of control was negatively correlated with focusing on and venting emotions, denial, behavioral disengagement, and emotional disengagement (Carver et al., 2014).

When trying to determine the relationship between coping and LOC, measuring coping as specific behaviors is a more valid approach. Problem-focused and emotion-focused coping each contain behaviors that would rely on one's self (internal) or rely on another (external). For example, focusing on and venting emotions and positive reinterpretation and growth are both emotion-focused coping strategies that rely on an external LOC and a powerful others LOC respectively. By looking at the specific behaviors of coping this problem is avoided.

Salma & Khalid (2014) conducted a study “Academic Locus of Control of High and Low Achieving Students”. The study investigated the academic locus of control of high and low achieving undergraduate students. It also explored the gender differences in terms of academic locus of control and the relationship between academic locus of control and academic achievement. Sample of the study consisted of 187 (126 high and 61 low) achieving BSc final year students. Independent group research design and purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Academic locus of control scale developed by Trice (1985) was administered. The scale classifies the students having scores from 0-14 as internals and with the score above than 14 as externals. Two –Factor ANOVA, correlation and simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. Results indicated a significant main effect of achiever and gender and no interaction between gender and achiever was found. High achieving students scored low on academic locus of control which indicates their strong internal academic orientation than low achieving students. Interestingly, the study indicated that high as well as low achieving students both hold an internal academic belief system towards the academic situations. Women are significantly high on an internal academic locus of control indicating less internal academic orientation than men. Results also indicated a significant inverse relationship between academic locus of control and GPA and simple linear regression indicated that academic locus of control is a predictor of GPA. The study has wide implications for the psychologists, educationists, teachers and students.

Mathur (2014) had a study titled “Academic Achievement of College Students and their Locus of Control.” The objective was to conduct a comparative study of the academic achievement and locus of control of college students. The researcher tried to gather a fair response from the total of 60 subjects between the age group of 18-21. The subjects were chosen randomly within the Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University. This study did not include effect of gender on the responses, as the locus of control is more of a cognitive drive which is independent from the gender specific ideology of the subjects. The research instruments used were Locus of control inventory (which reflects the way in which students feel about what happens in their academic institutions) and Life experience inventory (which reflects the experiences of life). The subjects were made to fill both the questionnaires and then the items were scored and results were analyzed. The scores were given to the subjects’ response based on the norms provided. Thereby each questionnaire response was scored and subjects were divided into two groups, namely, High on Internality (I) and Low on Internality (E). Further to this, the subjects were made to supply their overall academic performance grade, which was further analysed for each of the two groups. The two groups showed a clear indication that the group with high internality had a better Mean of their overall performance grade, 7.40, whereas the latter showed a weak overall performance grade of 5.93. Also, the two groups showed a well correlation of the type of locus of control as per the locus of control inventory and life experience inventory (0.97), depicting a true locus of control that the subjects follow as per their experiences of life and the way they perceive about their academia in the college.

Tabataba I (2013) conducted a study titled “Surveying the Relationship between Locus of Control and Academic Achievement among Students at Allameh University. This was a descriptive–correlative research study that included 132 undergraduate students enrolled in the university. T- test and Pearson correlation coefficient were used for data analyses. According to the results, there was no significant difference in GPAs in the internal and external locus of control between male and female students. A significant relationship existed between the internal locus of control and academic achievement in males, but not in females. The research results indicated that students with higher levels of internal locus of control had higher academic achievement.

Methodology

The research design of the study was quantitative and descriptive-correlational survey method. The respondents were the ninety seven Teacher Education students who filled out and returned the questionnaires in the First Semester of the Academic Year 2020-2021. One instrument used was the fully adapted Locus of Control Questionnaire with twenty items by Julian Rotter (1966) with the scoring :Give yourself 5 points for each question if you indicated False on questions: 2,3,5,6,9,10,12,13,14,16,19,20 and give yourself 5 points for each question if you indicated True on questions: 1,4,7,8,11,15,17,18. The score results will be described such as 0-15 Very strong external locus of control; 20-35 External locus of control; 40-60 Both external and internal locus of control; 65-80 Internal locus of control; 85-100 Very strong internal locus of control. Another instrument on Coping Mechanisms by Susan Folkman (1985) was used. The statistical tools used were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, rank, and Pearson’s r.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents as to curricular program and sex. BSED students had higher percentage than BEED students and Females had higher percentage than the Males.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents as to Curricular Program and Sex

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Curricular Programs		
BEED	16	16.5
BSED	81	83.5
Total	97	100.0
Sex		
Male	16	16.5
Female	81	83.5
Total	97	100.0

Table 2 presents the locus of control of the respondents as a whole and when classified as to curricular program and sex. The respondents had both the internal and external locus of control as a whole and when classified as to curricular program and sex. This implies that they attributed their success or failure to both internal and external factors. Moreover, they have the equilibrium or balance as to attribution of the happenings in their lives.

Table 2

Respondents' Locus of Control as a Whole and According to Curricular Programs and Sex

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
As an Entire Group (n=97)	57.66	11.74	Both external and internal locus of control
Curricular Programs			
BEED(n=16)	59.88	13.89	Both external and internal locus of control
BSED(n=81)	57.22	11.32	Both external and internal locus of control
Sex			
Male(n=16)	56.75	20.54	Both external and internal locus of control
Female(n=81)	57.84	9.29	Both external and internal locus of control

Table 3 presents the coping mechanisms of the respondents as a whole. The top five coping mechanisms of the respondents as a whole were “wishful thinking”, “emphasizing the positive”, “self-blame”, “problem focused coping” and “seeking social support”.

Table 3

Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents as a Whole

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank based on means
Problem focused coping	97	2.26	0.32	4
Wishful thinking	97	2.53	0.78	1
Distancing	97	2.01	0.47	6
Seeking Social Support	97	2.25	0.48	5
Emphasizing the Positive	97	2.45	0.51	2
Self-blame	97	2.29	0.51	3
Tension reduction	97	1.64	0.54	8
Self-isolation	97	1.98	0.54	7

Table 4 presents the coping mechanisms of the respondents according to curricular program. As to curricular program, the top five coping mechanisms of the Bachelor of Elementary Education students were “emphasizing the positive”, “wishful thinking”, seeking social support”, problem focused coping” and “self-blame”. The top five coping mechanisms of the Bachelor of Secondary Education students were “wishful thinking”, “emphasizing the positive”, “self-blame”, “problem focused coping” and “seeking social support”. The top five coping mechanisms of both programs are similar, only that they differ in their ranks.

Table 4

Top Eight Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents According to Curricular Program

	BEED(n=16)			BSED(n=81)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks based on Means	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks based on Means
Problem focused coping	2.22	0.34	4	2.27	0.32	4
Wishful thinking	2.31	0.37	2	2.57	0.83	1
Distancing	1.98	0.55	7	2.02	0.46	6
Seeking Social Support	2.29	0.51	3	2.25	0.47	5
Emphasizing the Positive	2.69	0.67	1	2.40	0.46	2
Self-blame	2.13	0.44	5	2.32	0.52	3
Tension reduction	1.77	0.32	8	1.61	0.57	8
Self-isolation	2.06	0.62	6	1.97	0.53	7

Table 5 presents the coping mechanisms according to sex. When classified as to sex, the top five coping mechanisms of the males were “wishful thinking”, emphasizing the positive”, “problem focused coping”, “self-blame”, and “self-isolation.” For the females, the top five coping mechanisms were “wishful thinking”, “emphasizing the positive”, self-blame”, “seeking social

support”, and “problem focused coping”. The top four coping mechanisms of both male and females are similar. The just differ in coping mechanism number 5.

Table 5

Top Eight Coping Mechanisms of the Respondents According to Sex

	Male (n=16)			Female(n=81)		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks based on Means	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ranks based on Means
Problem focused coping	2.25	0.39	3	2.26	0.30	5
Wishful thinking	2.53	0.39	1	2.53	0.84	1
Distancing	2.08	0.48	7	2.00	0.47	6
Seeking Social Support	2.08	0.60	6.5	2.29	0.45	4
Emphasizing the Positive	2.50	0.73	2	2.44	0.46	2
Self-blame	2.19	0.62	4	2.31	0.49	3
Tension reduction	1.52	0.44	8	1.66	0.56	8
Self-isolation	2.13	0.71	5	1.95	0.50	7

Table 6 presents the academic performance of the respondents as a whole and when classified as to curricular program and sex. As to academic performance, the respondents had “Very Good” rating in the upper bracket of 85 to 90 as a whole and as to curricular program and sex.

Table 6

Academic Performance of the Respondents as a Whole and According to Curricular Program and Sex

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Description
As an Entire Group (n=97)	89.20	3.57	Very Good
Curricular Programs			
BEED(n=16)	89.19	3.51	Very Good
BSED(n=81)	89.20	3.60	Very Good
Sex			
Male(n=16)	90.06	2.11	Very Good
Female(n=81)	89.02	3.78	Very Good

Table 7 presents the correlation between locus of control and academic performance. There was no significant association between locus of control and academic performance. Locus of control has 1.7% attribution to academic performance.

Table 7

Correlation of Locus of Control and Academic Performance

Variables	r	r ²	p-value	Description
Locus of Control and Academic Performance	0.131	0.017(1.7%)	0.202	Not Significant

Conclusions

The respondents attribute their failure or success to both internal and external factors. They have the psychological equilibrium. The top five coping mechanisms of the respondents are similar when classified as to curricular program and sex ; but they differ in their rank. They use more of the positive coping mechanisms than the negative ones. The academic performance of the respondents is on the upper level of “Very Good” but it still needs enhancement.

Recommendations

The students will retain their locus of control because equilibrium is very necessary in the teaching profession as it requires or demands multitasking and unlimited time to do the tasks especially during this time of pandemic. The respondents may be given an intervention activity to employ positive coping mechanisms, so that they may be steadfast in the midst of pressures and problems. The academic performance of the students needs to be enhanced to Outstanding (91-94) or even “Excellent” (95) so that when they apply for a job, they will have the higher chance of being hired. So, the teachers of the Teacher Education Program will really scaffold the students to have “Outstanding” or “Excellent” academic performance. The Gender and Development Office in coordination with the Guidance Center with the researchers may craft a Program for an Intervention Activity based on the results of the study.

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