

Understanding the Relationship between Faith-based Locus of Control and Academic Self-Efficacy among Muslim Students in Nigeria

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Abstract

In spite of numerous research reports demonstrating the relationship between locus of control (LOC) and academic self-efficacy (ASE) among Muslim students, studies on how faith-based LOC relates to ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria are scarce. This study employed a correlation survey to examine the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. The sample comprised university undergraduates (n=124) [71 females and 53males] aged between 18 and 35 years in the federal universities in South East, Nigeria. A purposive sampling procedure was used to get the sample for the study. The researchers adopted two instruments for this study: A 20 item structured Faith-based external LOC Scale (FBLCS) adapted from Rotter (1966). The second instrument is a five-item General Academic Self Efficacy Scale (GASES) adapted from Braun et al. (2021). The instrument was used in measuring students' ASE. The data analysis in this study was done using version 29 of IBM SPSS. The relationship between the study variables was established using regression analysis while linear regression (t-test) and Hayes' PROCESS were used to analyze the hypotheses. Result shows that there is a significant positive relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. Furthermore, result also shows that there is no significant influence of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. It was recommended that teachers and stakeholders in Islamic Education system should strive to incorporate the faith aspect of their LOC into their curriculum for optimal development.

Article History

Received: 01-11-2023

Revised: 07-12-2023

Accepted: 15-12-2023

Keywords:

Divine Decree;
Faith-based LOC;
Muslim Students;
Self-efficacy.



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INTRODUCTION

The role of religious faith in life aspiration and achievement is critical (Caplan, 2019). Although religion may offer some psychological support, it can also negatively impact an individual's psychological health (Estrada et al., 2019) and life views (Spilka et al., 1997). Based on an individual's attributions, religion has been shown to influence life aspiration and psychological well-being (Bass, 2019). A religious attribution is derived from a particular religion's beliefs and teachings (Paloutzian & Park, 2021; Spilka et al., 1997). The Islamic religion consists of six major beliefs, one of which is belief in divine decree (Saritoprak & Abu-Raiya, 2023; Zakaria & Mat Akhir, 2019). A divine decree is an article of faith centered on God's will. Muslim belief is that everything is governed by divine decree (Parrott, 2017). Therefore, everything that happens to an individual is predetermined. This implies that religious belief (Muslim) has a substantially effect on the worshiper locus of control (LOC) (Montes-Iturrizaga & Heredia-Zavoni, 2016).

A faith-based LOC occurs when an individual's LOC is solely determined by their faith and religious doctrines (Ai et al., 2005). A faith-based LOC, therefore, can be defined as the tendency for individuals to attribute whatever happens to them to predestination and fate derived from religious teachings (Iles-Caven et al., 2023). An individual's LOC denotes his or her belief that events happen in their lives because of themselves, other powerful people, or other factors, such as faith or luck (Arkorful & Hilton, 2022). The feeling of attribution is typically associated with an

event in an individual's life which LOC determines the response to such events (Galvin et al., 2018). There are two types of loci of control which include intrinsic and extrinsic LOC. Individual who has an extrinsic LOC believe that events in their lives are determined by luck, faith, chance, or fate while an individual with intrinsic LOC, on the other hand, believes they are in full control of everything they do (Galvin et al., 2018; Kesavayuth et al., 2020). Therefore, a distinct individual has either an internal or external LOC. A person's religious beliefs and practices can also influence how the person acts (Clark et al., 2017; Clark et al., 2018). Thus, religious doctrines could ultimately shape the extrinsic LOC (Schoephoerster, 2017). Muslims believe that Allah has absolute control over men's fortunes, and so they should accept whatever good or bad comes their way in good faith (Haron et al., 2020). In the knowledge that their misfortune was divinely decreed, they could overcome it with gratitude and patience (Sri Mohd Kamal Hassan, 1442).

The LOC is one of the major determinants as well as the variation of academic self-efficacy (ASE) in the school setting (Çepni & Kitiş, 2016; Gupta et al., 2018; Uzun & Karataş, 2020). There is a strong, but subtle relationship between an individual's LOC and their ASE, according to Wahyeni and Gailea (2022). Student ASE refers to their belief or confidence in their competence and their ability to achieve a particular academic task or goal (Kolo et al., 2017; Stipanovic et al., 2017). A person's degree of confidence that they will succeed at a certain level in a specific academic task can be characterized as their ASE (Malkoç & Mutlu, 2018). There seems to be a highly significant relationship between ASE and faith-based LOC, despite the fact that little research has been conducted on the subject. There is evidence that individuals with an external LOC tend to have low ASE, which can result in low academic achievement (Certel & Kozak, 2017; Korkmaz et al., 2018; Uzun & Karataş, 2020). Many aspects of students' academic lives are affected by ASE (Alghamdi et al., 2023; Mehmood et al., 2019). According to Ansong et al. (2019) students with higher levels of ASE have higher aspirations in life and achieve more in academic tasks.

Research has shown that studies has been done on the relationship between LOC and ASE among students. However, the faith aspect of LOC has rarely been explored in studies related to LOC and ASE. First, research conducted by Drago et al. (2016) examined the effect of LOC, ASE, and tutoring on academic performance. The sample of this study was drawn from northeastern mid-sized university, USA. A small moderating effect of LOC was found on ASE in the study. While this study established the relationship between LOC and ASE, our study aimed to examine the relationship between faith based LOC and ASE in higher education in Nigerian context. Second, in a study conducted at Yazd University of Medical Sciences, Ashagi and Beheshtifar (2015) examined the relationship between LOC and ASE beliefs. The study population consisted of 534 staff members at Yazd Central University of Medical Sciences. In order to sample 220 people, the researchers used the Cochran formula. A significant relationship between external LOC and ASE was not found in the study. Third, Kırmızı and Sarıçoban (2018) examined the LOC and ASE of English as foreign language (EFL) teachers in Turkish contexts. It was found that EFL teachers with a higher level of education had a higher ASE.

Despite the existence of literature on LOC and ASE, there is a dearth of empirical literature on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. This is because Nigeria is designated as a religious country, and it assumed to significantly affect the kind of behaviour they exhibit. Among Muslim students, it is imperative to note that they tend to believe and adhere to the belief in divine decree, which assumes that events in people's lives are absolutely controlled by external forces such as God (Abdul-Rahman, 2017; Saritoprak & Abu-Raiya, 2023). According to Jou (2022), Muslim students who believe in divine decree are more likely to have an external LOC. A trend of low aspiration and poor academic performance among students in Nigerian universities prompted the researcher to investigate the relationship between LOC and ASE. It is expected that the findings of this study would be valuable to Nigerian ministry of education, Muslim groups and students because it will reveal the relationship between the faith-based LOC and ASE among students as well as the moderating effect of gender.

Thus, the research questions in this article are, *First*, what is the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria?. *Second*, how does gender moderate the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria?. The hypotheses proposed based on these questions are, *First*, there is no significant relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. The alternative hypothesis is there is a significant relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. *Second*, there is no significant influence of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria. The alternative hypothesis is there is a significant influence of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria

METHODS

This study used correlational survey design. This type of design establishes a pattern of relationships between two or more variables. The correlational survey design does not involve any experimental procedure that is to say that there is no manipulation of any of the variables. Using this design, the researcher tried to establish the relationship existing between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria.

All undergraduate students in South East Nigeria made up the study population. The sample comprised university undergraduates (n=124) [71 females and 53males] aged between 18 and 35 years in the federal universities in South East, Nigeria. To obtain the sample for the study, a purposive sampling procedure was used.

The researcher adopted two instruments for this study: A structured Faith-based external LOC Scale (FBLCS) adapted from Rotter is a 20-item instrument, which assesses the faith components of the students' external LOC. (e.g., *'many of the unhappy things that happen in people's lives are is the wish of God (Allah)*). The faith components of LOC scale cut across the superior and pre-determined role of God (Allah) in everything that happen in people's lives. The instrument was structured in line with the foundation of Islamic belief in the overriding supremacy of divine decree, which determine the fortune of the peoples' life fortunes, successes, luck, fate, experiences and others. The student participants were instructed to indicate in affirmation or otherwise the best option that describes their position in each item in the scale. The sum total of responses in FBLCS were summed to produce a cumulative FBLCS score, ranging from 0—10; higher scores being indicative of faith-based LOC. The second instrument used for the study is the General Academic Self Efficacy Scale (GASES) adapted from Braun et al. (2021). The instrument was used in measuring students' ASE. The GASES is a five-item self-report instrument which has five-point Likert scale which ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). For instance, one of the items in the scale reads *'I believe I can pass the exam if I read very well during the school term.'* Since the instruments were adopted, validity of the instruments was not conducted, however, the reliability of the instruments was conducted using Cronbach Alpha reliability test. The FBLCS yielded reliability coefficient of .830 while GASES yielded 0.842. The high reliability scores associated with these instruments shows that they are reliable.

The data analysis in this study was done using version 29 of IBM SPSS. The relationship between the study variables was established using regression analysis. Classical assumption test such as normality and heteroscedasticity test were conducted on datasets. Research question one was answered using linear regression while research question was answered using Hayes' PROCESS. Hypothesis 1 was tested using linear regression while hypothesis 2 was tested using Hayes PROCESS.

Linear regression is a statistical tool used in correlational survey designs to establish the direction and strength of relationships between variables. In addition, Haye's PROCESS was used because it is the suitable regression add-on suitable for conducting observed-variable moderation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results of Classical Assumption Test

Table 1. Test of Normality

	Statistic	Shapiro-Wilk	
		df	Sig.
GASES	.917	124	.000
FBLCS	.983	124	.116

In Table 1, the Shapiron-Wilk normality test was used to test GASES and FBLCS datasets. The p-value (0.00) of GASES is less than 0.05 level of significance, which means the instrument is not normally distributed. This could be attributed to the nature of the questionnaire used for data collection. Furthermore, the p-value (p = .116) of FBLCS is greater than the 0.05 level of significance which indicates that the dataset is normally distributed.

Table 2. Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey

F-statistic	2.270256553576	Prob. F(1,122)	0.1345
Obs*R-squared	2.2653193165499	Prob. Chi-Square(1)	0.1323
Scaled explained SS	3.2879009742491	Prob. Chi-Square(1)	0.0698

Table 2 shows heteroscedasticity tests using Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey. As the P-value (0.1323) is greater than 0.05, the dataset exhibits homoscedasticity and is free of heteroscedasticity

Research Question One

What is the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim undergraduate students in Nigeria?

Table 3. Regression analysis of the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.406 ^a	.165	.158	.421

a. Predictors: (Constant), GASES

Table3 shows that the correlation between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim undergraduates' students in Nigeria is 0.406. This means that faith-based LOC positively formed a bond with ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. However, the coefficient of determination of .165 shows that 16.5% percent ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria is traced to their faith-based LOC. This is an indication that 86 percent of the ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria is attributed to factors other than their faith-based LOC.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria.

Table 4. Linear regression analysis of the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	2.045	.258		7.928	.000
	GASES	.381	.078	.406	4.914	.000

a. Dependent Variable: FBLCS

Table 4 shows that there is a significant positive relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria ($t [1, 123] = 4.914, p < 0.000$) at 0.05 level. This indicates alternative hypothesis was accepted while null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, the researcher infer that the faith-based LOC significantly impacts the ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria. In other words, high ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria is determined by positive faith-based LOC, whereas low ASE will strongly relate with negative faith-based LOC.

Research Question Two

How does gender moderate the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria?

Table 5. Regression analysis between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria on the basis of gender

R	R-sq	MSE	F	Df1	Df2	p
.3823	.1462	.0402	6.8469	3.000	120.00	.0003

Table 5 shows that the correlation between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria is 0.382. This means that faith-based LOC positively formed a bond with ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. However, the coefficient of determination of 0.140 shows that 14 percent ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria is traced to their faith-based LOC. This is an indication that 86 percent of the ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria is attributed to factors other than their faith-based LOC.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria.

Table 6. Hayes process analysis of the moderating influence of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria.

	Coef	se	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
constant	3.0997	.7310	4.2403	.0000	1.6524	4.5471
GASE	0.791	.2183	.3623	.7178	-3.531	.5112
Gender	-.3768	.4280	-.8803	.3804	-1.2243	.4707
Int_1	.1133	.1271	.8918	.3743	-.1383	.3649

Table 6 shows that gender does not influence the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE on the basis of gender of Muslim students in Nigeria ($t [1, 123] = -.8803, p < 0.3804$). Thus,

null hypothesis 2 accepted at $p < 0.05$. Therefore, the researchers infer that students' gender does not influence the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE. In other words, the interaction of gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE is not significant.

First, this study showed that there is a considerable positive relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in south-east Nigeria. Therefore, the researchers infer that the faith-based LOC significantly influences the ASE of Muslim students in Nigeria. In other words, high ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria is determined by positive faith-based LOC, whereas low ASE will strongly relate to negative faith-based LOC. This finding could be attributed to the fact that faith-based LOC to a large extent determines undergraduate students' ASE because they are endowed with the inclination that their learning outcome is backed up by almighty God. Therefore, Muslim doctrine teaching in southeast Nigeria has the potential to stimulate the undergraduate students' LOC, which is extremely essential for engaging in learning activities. The above finding supports the findings of Kırmızı and Sarıçoban (2018), who reported that the higher the LOC of EFL teachers, the higher their level of ASE. This implies that faith-based LOC plays a big role in the students' ASE. It is however, imperative to state that this finding contradicts the findings of Ashagi and Beheshtifar (2015), who reported that there was not a substantial relationship between external LOC and self-efficacy.

Furthermore, the study also showed that students' gender does not influence the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. Therefore, the researchers infer that students' gender is not a significant moderator of the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE in south-east Nigeria. This means that irrespective of undergraduate students' gender, faith-based LOC has a significant relationship with ASE among Muslim students. The findings of this study align with the findings of Gupta et al. (2018), who found that there is no significant relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE based on gender. This indicates that gender is not a significant moderator of the relationship between ASE and LOC. This study disagrees with the findings of Sharma (2021), who revealed that female teachers show significantly greater occupational self-efficacy and greater LOC orientation than their male counterparts.

This study has practical educational implications for Imams, school administration, and undergraduate Muslim students in Nigeria. This study revealed that faith-based LOC is significantly associated with ASE. In this regard, Muslim religious teaching has a strong influence on undergraduate students' LOC and ASE. In addition, religious teachings stimulate students' LOC and ASE, which can have both positive and negative effects on their learning outcomes. In addition, this study found that gender does not have any significant impact on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE. This implies that the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE is not significantly moderated by gender. Hence, the influence is equal between male and female Muslim students.

Due to the design of the study and the instruments used for data collection, the study has some inherent limitations. In this study, only questionnaires were used for data collection, indicating that no interviews or group discussions were conducted. The findings of this study were based on a sample of Muslim undergraduate students in the south-east; therefore, generalising them to the entire Nigerian population should be done with caution. To overcome the above limitation, future researchers should use mixed methods to extract both qualitative and quantitative data. Future researchers should also expand the study's scope by sampling students from the north, central, and south-west.

CONCLUSION

Faith-based LOCs among Muslim students in Nigeria play a significant role in shaping their ASE. This study focused on establishing the relationship between the faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. Furthermore, this study concentrated on establishing the influence of students' gender on the relationship between faith-based LOC and ASE among Muslim students in Nigeria. This study unveiled that faith-based LOC has substantial impacts on students'

ASE and that the moderating influence of students' gender is insignificant. This study concludes that faith-based LOC significantly influences students' ASE, regardless of gender. This study recommends that teachers in higher schools in Nigeria should take into account faith-based LOC when implementing curriculum content. It is important for imams to be aware that students' faith has a significant impact on their ASE, so they should preach in a manner that stimulates students' ASE. Knowing fully well that faith is a significant factor in Muslim students' academic journey, teachers and stakeholders in the Islamic education system should strive to incorporate the faith aspect of their LOC into their curriculum for optimal development.

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