



## Locus of Control, Academic Procrastination and Students' Learning Outcomes in Secondary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

This study explored locus of control, academic procrastination and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State. A correlational design was adopted for the study. The sample size for this study is 200 senior secondary school students. The main instruments utilised for data gathering were a questionnaire titled "Locus of Control Academic Procrastination Questionnaire (LOCAPQ)" and students' terminal results to determine students' learning outcomes. The data were analysed using simple correlation and simple regression at significance level of 0.05. The findings showed a significant association between LC and learning outcomes, and between AP and learning outcomes, among secondary school students. Based on the results of this study, it was concluded a substantial correlation between LC, AP, and learning outcomes among secondary school students. On the basis of the study findings, the following recommendations were made, among others, that school administrators should organise a seminar to orient students on the consequences of LC and AP on their learning outcomes.

### KEYWORDS:

Locust of Control (LC), Academic Procrastination (AP), learning outcomes, Students.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In Nigeria, particularly in Delta State, learning outcomes are used to assess students' overall potential and capabilities. Perhaps this is why Oguzie, Nwokolo, Mokwelu, and Ezunu (2019) emphasised the importance of students' learning outcomes, given their central role in both the educational system and the learning process. Hence, higher academic attainment is very important and the desire of every student, parent, government, and educator. Learning outcomes represent how well a student achieves their short-term educational goals. It is the knowledge or competence attained in school tasks as measured by standardised tests and expressed in a grade. It is important for the successful development of young people in society. Students who perform well in school are better able to transition to adulthood and achieve occupational and economic success (Regier, 2015). Students' learning outcomes are significant in education and the learning process (Obro & Odofin, 2025).

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Taking into account the significance of enhancing the academic success of students for their lives and society, the government implemented various policies to enhance teaching and learning in secondary schools.

However, it's widely recognised that, despite the State Government's efforts to improve teaching and learning, secondary school students continue to achieve unsatisfactory results in both internal and external assessments. Several factors might contribute to this issue, including small class sizes, a lack of teaching resources, teachers who aren't properly qualified, an unsuitable learning environment, students' Locus of Control (LC), and Academic Procrastination (AP).

Locus of Control (LC) is a generalised belief of the fundamental causes of events in an individual's life. LC pertains to the attributions we assign to our achievements and/or shortcomings in academic endeavours (Grantz, 2015). Individuals hold different beliefs about the factors that control their destiny, and these beliefs shape the attitudes people adopt toward events in their lives. Conversely, the concept of LC is differentiated into two primary dimensions: internal and external. Students possessing an internal LC perceive their actions as determined by their own choices and exertions; in contrast, those with an external locus of control attribute their behaviours to external factors. It refers to a student's belief system regarding the origins of their academic

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experiences, specifically the factors they attribute to their academic attainments or setbacks. Consequently, a student's LC reflects the sources they identify as responsible for their academic successes and failures.

A student has an internal LC if they attribute their achievements and setbacks to things they can influence, including their own skill or effort. On the other hand, an external LC is present in a student who attributes their academic performance to accidental or fate-based variables. Higher levels of memorisation and, by extension, better grades, are common among students who have an internal LC.

Learning outcomes have been identified as playing an important role in human lives and activities (Oguzie, Oguzie, Nnadi, Mokwelu & Obi, 2019). The researcher thus found it necessary to investigate a salient variable that may influence students' learning outcomes. Coleman and Deleire (2017) report that LC strongly influences learning outcomes and the decision to graduate from high school. An interesting finding of Anderson et al. (2019) was that LC was a multidimensional construct, with students having both high internal and high external scores. The authors reported that their study findings supported previous research linking learning outcomes and LC. They reported that high externality might be detrimental to learning outcomes, whereas high internality might have a strong, favourable impact.

Another variable that may negatively influence students' learning outcomes is Academic Procrastination (AP). Procrastination is delaying important tasks by doing less important ones or by doing things you enjoy instead, thereby postponing the important tasks. A better way to put it is that it causes one to postpone what they should be doing. Putting off reading the material for an exam until the last minute, putting off collecting information for a paper until the last possible moment, or putting off turning in the assignment altogether are all examples of poor time management. Thus, delay things that students ought to do unnecessarily. Psychyl (2022) suggested that procrastination involves replacing critical tasks with less important ones or engaging in activities that provide happiness or pleasure, thereby delaying the accomplishment of crucial work. Anxiety, low self-esteem, a lack of self-confidence, a fear of achievement, and an obsession with perfection are among the many factors that contribute to this behavioural issue. Anxiety, low self-esteem, and a fear of failing are common outcomes of secondary school students' procrastination behaviour problem, and perfectionism, which in turn leads some students to delay their academic activities, despite term extensions and the afternoon and evening preparation seriously practised in schools. This behaviour has reached its peak in the schooling system and, consequently, leads to widespread failure in terminal, promotional, and final examinations, posing a serious problem for society. The problem also leads students

to forgo opportunities they are due for, socially and educationally.

Academic Procrastination (AP) adversely impacts students' learning outcomes (Pestana & Codina, 2023). Numerous studies indicate a significant association between AP and diminished learning outcomes (Goher & Batool, 2022). It has been noted that students who exhibit higher levels of procrastination generally achieve lower final scores (Santos, Villarama et al., 2022). Furthermore, AP is positively connected with academic stress, suggesting that higher stress levels increase the propensity to procrastinate, which in turn exacerbates learning outcomes. Several studies have identified a positive connection between academic anxiety and AP among students (Sari & Hazim, 2023; Sudirman, 2023; Reza et al., 2023).

### **Research Questions**

- What is the association between LC and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools?
- What is the relationship between AP and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools?

### **Hypotheses**

- There is no significant association between LC and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools.
- There is no significant association between AP and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopted the correlational design. A correlational survey research design was adopted because the researchers examined the associations among LC, AP, and learning outcomes of secondary school students.

### **Study Population**

Every single student enrolled in Delta State's Ethiope East Local Government Area's Senior Secondary School Two (SSS II) was considered for the study's population. Approximately 1,786 students attend 24 public secondary schools operated by the local government, known as Senior Secondary School Two (SSS II).

### **Sample**

The study's sample comprised 200 SSII students, selected via random sampling from 10 secondary schools. The study used a sample of ten (10) secondary schools, with twenty students chosen from each school.

### **Research Instrument**

The data collection instrument involved a questionnaire and the student's terminal results. The questionnaire titled "Locus of control, Academic procrastination Questionnaire (LOCAPQ) and students' terminal results were used to determine students' learning outcomes. The questionnaire contains 2 sections: Section A comprises respondents'

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demographic data, and Section B comprises 2 scales, namely LC and AP. The first section of the questionnaire collects students' demographic information, including school location and gender.

### Instrument Validity

Content and construct validity were assessed through research on the instrument to determine whether it would measure what it was intended to measure.

### Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha to evaluate the instrument's internal consistency. The coefficient for LC was 0.84, whereas that for AP was 0.77. This shows that the instrument is reliable for the study.

### Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered to students by two research assistants. They were retrieved immediately from the respondents to prevent loss.

### Analysis of Data

The data obtained was analysed using inferential statistics. The Pearson Coefficient of Determination was employed to analyse the research questions, while linear regression was employed to test the hypotheses. At a significance level of 0.05, all hypotheses were evaluated.

## III. RESULTS

**RQ 1:** What is the association between LC and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools?

**Table 1: Correlation Analysis of the Association between LC and Learning Outcomes**

Variables	N	R	r <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted r <sup>2</sup>	Remark
Locus of control	200	.576	.331	.329	Positive relationship
Learning Outcomes	200				

Table 1 summarises the simple correlation analysis of the association between LC and learning outcomes among secondary school students. The association results ( $r = 0.576$ ) indicated a positive association between LC and students' learning outcomes. Thus, it was concluded that there is a positive relationship between LC and students' learning outcomes. The adjusted R-squared value of .329 accounts for 32.9% of the variance in learning outcomes.

**RQ2:** What is the association between AP and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools?

**Table 2: Correlation Analysis of the Association between AP and Learning Outcomes**

Variables	N	R	r <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted r <sup>2</sup>	Remark
Academic Procrastination	200	.562	.316	.314	Positive Relationship
Learning Outcomes					

Table 2 presents a summary of the simple association analysis examining the relationship between AP and learning outcomes among secondary school students. The association coefficient ( $r = 0.562$ ) indicates a positive correlation between AP and learning outcomes in this demographic. Consequently, a positive association between AP and students' learning outcomes is evident. The adjusted  $r^2$  value of .314 indicates that 31.4% of the variance in learning outcomes is explained by AP.

**Hypothesis One:** There is no significant association between LC and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools

**Table 3: Linear Regression Summary of the Association between LC and Learning Outcomes among Secondary School Students.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
1	.576	.331	.329	.75845		
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	104.263	1	104.263	181.25	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	210.538	199	.575		
	Total	314.802	198			

Table 3 shows a linear regression on the association between LC and learning outcomes among secondary school students. The calculated F statistic is 181.251 ( $df = 1, 199$ ), with a p-value  $< 0.001$ . The p-value is less than 0.05, the conventional significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant association between LC and learning outcomes was rejected. This indicates a significant association between LC and students' learning outcomes. The r-square value of 0.331 showed that LC accounted for 33.1% of the variance in students' learning outcomes. It is therefore concluded here that there is an association between LC and learning outcomes among secondary school students.

**Hypothesis Two:** There is no significant association between AP and students' learning outcomes in secondary schools.

**Table 4: Linear Regression Summary of Association between AP and Learning outcomes among Secondary School Students.**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R-Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
	.562	.316	.314	.76727		
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	99.338	1	99.338	168.74	.000
	Residual	215.463	199	.589		
	Total	314.802	198			

Table 4 presents a linear regression of AP on learning outcomes among secondary school students. The calculated F statistic is 168.742, with df (1, 199), and a p-value of 0.000. The p-value is less than 0.05, the conventional significance level. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant association between AP and students' learning outcomes was rejected. This indicates a significant association between AP and students' learning. The R-squared value of 0.314 showed that AP accounted for 31.4% of the variance in students' learning outcomes. It's therefore concluded that a positive significant relationship exists between AP and students' learning outcomes.

**IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The results of research question one and hypothesis one revealed a significant association between LOC and learning outcomes of secondary school students. This research provides further evidence that students' learning outcomes improve when they feel agency over their learning. As a result of taking charge of their education, making plans, and consistently putting in the work, these kids typically achieve better results in class. Academic success is more likely to accrue to students who have an internal locus of control, or who believe that their performance is directly proportional to the effort they put in. Unlike students whose locus of control is external, students with an internal locus of control are more likely to take charge of their education, set reasonable objectives, and work hard to achieve them. The results corroborate Vidals' (2015) finding that a person's sense of agency influences their actions and performance in the classroom. An association between students' academic LOC and their learning outcomes was also discovered by Jaiswal and Choudhuri (2017) and Dramanu and Balarabe (2018). On the other hand, it contradicts the claims made by John, Abdul-Jaleel, and Dawson-Brew (2020), who argued that environmental factors could moderate the effect of locus of control on academic performance, implying a more nuanced relationship.

According to the second hypothesis, students who postpone their homework until the last minute tend to struggle academically, as evidenced by a strong correlation between

procrastination and actual classroom performance among secondary school students. As is common among students who consistently achieve high levels of performance, these individuals may delay starting assignments until they feel pressured to complete them quickly. This discovery lends credence to Goulão's (2021) observation that, even with high levels of procrastination, there was a notable correlation between AP and students' learning outcomes. Be cautious, however, in drawing conclusions from this, as other variables, such as time management and motivation, tend to attenuate the negative correlation between procrastination and learning outcomes in the larger study.

**V. CONCLUSION**

Findings from this study suggest a connection between secondary school students' LOC and their AP. Additionally, it was determined that secondary school students' AP is significantly correlated with their learning outcomes.

**VI. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Since it was affirmed that there is a correlation among LOC, AP and students' learning outcomes, school administrators should organise time-management and study-skills workshops to help students convert harmful procrastination into strategic planning.
2. Schools should introduce mentorship and guidance programs that help students understand the importance of personal determination and responsibility in learning.

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