

## Research Article

# Locus of Control in Late Adolescence: Characteristics and Ability of New Students to Overcome Depression

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to uncover and gain some factual data about locus of control (LOC) ability to overcome depression in late adolescence. This study was conducted through survey methods on new under-graduate students aged 18 to 21 years old from English Education program in Mathla'ul Anwar University of Banten at first semester of academic year 2015-2016. The result of study showed that majority of the students has internal LOC. The students who have external LOC tend to get more depressed than those who pose internal LOC. The numbers of women who get depressed are more than men. The finding also showed positive influence of reading book in gaining capacity of LOC. Depression can be avoided and prevented by spiritual and mental strengthening, such as being closer to God, spending quality time with parents, siblings and friends, doing some new hobbies and activities, getting involved in fun daily activities, and trying to identify sense of fear of being rejected or guilty feelings.

**Keywords:** Depression, Hobby, LOC, Late Adolescence.

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## INTRODUCTION

There are many suffering people who cannot achieve happiness in their lives because of their inability to adapt well to family, education, employment and social lives. There are also people who get stressed and depressed, due to their failure to face stressful conditions.

Each person is different when reacting to particular situations, so the successful key to face the situations is to control any situation

and turn it into positive energy to help us meet our targets and expected goals. People's response to stressful situations that depends on their control over the situation is called self-control or commonly defined as Locus of Control (LOC). LOC refers to individuals' orientation or perception on the cause of a situation or event in his life (Phares, 1976). These perceptions influence their levels of expectation, motivation, self-esteem, and risky decisions that ultimately influences

actual situation as a result of their actions as a circular causation.

Many people assume that LOC orientation is innate, stable, and the basis of someone's personality. However, various theories and studies have shown that LOC is a learning outcome since LOC is considered as one of the human responses to a situation that is constructed by environment and life experience (Atmadi, 2013)

There are two types of LOC (Asthiningsih, Marchira, & Sedyowinarso, 2010, p. 139), namely internal LOC (internal self-control) and external LOC (external self-control). Individuals with internal self-control will feel confident that they have control over what happens in their lives, while individuals with external self-control will perceive everything happened in their lives is caused by external factors, such as luck, destiny, or by powerful people (Lefcourt, 1982)

Some research suggests that individuals with internal self-control tend to have more active efforts to achieve their objectives; they are more active in seeking information, more prepared and aware of their surroundings, and more independent in making a decision. Individuals with an external self-control tend to be familiar with depression, anxiety, and cannot really adapt to their everyday life (Lefcourt, 1982).

Calhoun & Acocella (1990) defined self-control as the setting to process someone's physic, psychology, and behavior; or in other words it is a series of processes that form themselves. Self-control is also associated with controlling emotions and impulses within someone. Someone who has a good self-control will consider all the consequences they will get before making a decision to act, and he is capable to turn emotions into a positive energy which is socially acceptable. Munandar (2001) said that in a depressive condition, people will feel tense, unable to think rationally so they will easily become angry, sad, anxious, and depressed.

Self-control of one person is different to another. This different self-control has an

impact on the level of depression felt by each person. Individuals who are emotionally mature are able to control themselves when faced with pressures in their tasks and lives. Thus, they would control over the pressures to avoid depression.

Goefron (2003, p. 30) explained that self-control is an individual's ability to sensitively read their situation and surroundings, as well as the ability to control and manage their behavioral factors to be in line with conditions for them to present themselves in socializing ability to control behavior, the tendency to attract attention, desire to change their behaviors that suit others', to please others, and to always conform others and hide their feelings.

Goleman (2005, p. 131) defined self-control as an ability to control emotions, that shows a sense of calm and no revenge. Goleman further (2005, p. 132) stated that self control can be in a form of a great responsibility both at school or work, when someone successfully can control his emotion considering that the emotion can be very powerful to control his thoughts and memories. When a person is angry, then the easiest thing to remember is revenge itself, in which the mind becomes preoccupied with the object of anger and irritability will overturn the way of thinking that usually makes someone see everything negatively.

Hurlock (1997, p. 232), explained that if a person can control his emotions well, then the emotion will affect his behavior, so that there will be well controlled behaviors. Physical and mental considerations (behavior) before making any act or decision would be a choice, if only the emotions can be released and controlled in various ways

Ubaedy (2005, p. 225) defined self-control as an ability to withdraw from unexpected norms to expected norms. Self-control is an ability to treat and create a response that matches someone's desires, interests and personal needs. The role of self-control is to create a stable life. Furthermore, Ubaedy (2005, p. 227) proposed five keys to create and develop a system of self-control:

staying away from unexpected norms, correcting mistakes, based on the correction, being critical about any information, and being more spiritual.

Asthiningsih, Marchira, & Sedyowinarso (2010) examined the relationship between self control and depression among college students. The finding of study shows that students with external self control (LOC) are more likely to experience depression compared to those with internal self-control (LOC). There was a significant relationship between the ability of self-control (LOC) and a tendency to get depressed among the college students.

According to the department of health (2009), there are approximately 1.7 million people suffering from mental disorders in Indonesia. As for college students, especially new students, the prevalence of depression is higher than general population (Hariyanto, 2010). In addition, there are many studies that found women tend to experience depression more severe than men, based on race and education level (Davis & Katzman, 1997; Gladstone & Koenig, 2002; Chartier & Lassan, 2002; Alfeld-Liro & Sigelman, 2002; Sigmond et al, 2006)

Some experts gave a definition of depression, as stated by Lubis (2009) that depression is a painful experience or a feeling in which there is no more hope remains. Individuals suffering from depression generally show typical psychological, physical and social symptoms, such as depression, prolonged sadness, sensitiveness, irritability, loss of passion, loss of confidence, loss of concentration, and decreased immune.

Depression is not caused by just one thing, but there are several things that can cause depression. Although stress often results in depression, yet not everyone who are stressed becomes depressed. Factors such as coping abnormalities, genetic inheritance, and social may contribute to a state of depressed when faced with stressful situations (Nevid et al, 2005). Depressive symptoms more often occur to the first year students due to several reasons, such as: the first time being away

from home (for students who stay in dorms), demand to live independently, longing for family & friends, and most often is to face a new life as a student in which they have to adapt to new friendships, academic atmosphere at campus, as well as socio-economic pressures.

The above description of the problem requires several attempts from relevant parties to overcome depression among students. However both educational institutions and parents are not the only ones to be responsible in this case, the students themselves should be the ones to have their own control over their actions.

If a student has a low self-control, the student would not be able to look after himself, in the management of intelligence, behavior, and emotions thus the student will not have good control over his actions. If this is not stopped, then his emotions would become unstable and easily to get influenced by negative things, even he may get depressed and become a self-destructive person.

## **METHODS**

This study is a field research that applied a survey method. This method was chosen to determine and describe the results of study conducted by collecting the data through surveys on student self-control ability in overcoming depression.

The subjects used in this study were all first semester students in academic period of 2015-2016 from undergraduate program of English Education at Mathla'ul Anwar Banten University aged between 18 to 21 years old, or categorized as late adolescence.

Among 58 students enrolled, the ones who met the criteria of the study were 49 students. Since female students dominated the number of respondents, therefore as many as five female participants were not involved in the study in order to meet the elements of a balanced proportion (50-50) based on sex, so that the samples used were 44 new students of English Education Study Program from FKIP

Unma Banten, in which as many as 22 participants were male and 22 participants were females.

The scales of self-control used are Internal scale, Powerful others, and Chance (IPC) proposed by Levenson. In IPC scales, internal aspect (I) is the aspect that reveals the internal LOC, while the powerful aspects of others (P) and Chance (C) are used to reveal the external LOC. According to Halpert et al (2011), Levenson's IPC scale is a developed version of Rotter's scale.

The depression scale used in this study is *Beck Depression Inventory* (BDI), that was developed by Aaron T. Beck (1985), but has been modified by Burns (1988), and then it is called BDI II scale. BDI II scale contains categories of depressive symptoms that consist of: sadness, pessimism, sense of failure, dissatisfaction, guilt, fear of punishment, non-confidence, self-blame, suicidal thoughts, frequent crying, irritability (irritability), solitude, not capable of making decisions, feeling not confident with body image, decline in work, tiredness, loss of appetite, weight loss, anxiety (somatic preoccupation), and loss of interest in sex. The depression scale used consists of 21 groups of statements that each group consisted of four statements.

Both LOC scale and depression scale or *Beck Depression Inventory* test have not been experimented before, considering the items and measurement of these scales are already validated. These scales are standardized.

The research was carried out by the following research procedures: 1) Listing the questionnaire; 2) Data Processing; 3) Data Analysis; 4) making a Conclusion (generalization); and 5) Writing a report.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The number of participants in this study are 44 students with a total of the percentage between men and women are alike, (50:50). The age of the participants are between 18 to 21 years old, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Participants

Sex	Total	%	Age			
			18-19	%	20-21	%
Male	22	50,00	13	29,55	9	20,45
Female	22	50,00	12	27,27	10	22,73
Total	44	100,00	25	56,82	19	43,18

The assessment of self-control (LOC) of new students from English Education Study Program Unma Banten is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. LOC of New Students

Categories	Total	Percentage (%)
Internal	28	63,64
External	16	36,36
Total	44	100,00

As shown in Table 2, there is more than 60 percent of participants pose internal self-control (LOC). The reason this happened because these participants believe that they are the ones who control their lives and determine what to achieve and life, not because of fate or ruled by powerful people (Lefcourt, 1982). Individuals having this internal self-control (LOC) have several characteristics such as diligent, independent, having good assumptions about others, and strong durability against social influence. Zimbardo and Ruch (1979) stated that individuals with internal self control (LOC) are responsible, easily motivated, mentally strong, and a courageous fighter. Levenson (Anwar, 2008) added that internal aspects of LOC make individuals think that what happens in their lives is determined by their own decisions.

A total of one third of participants have external LOC. Participants with this external self control tend to believe that their way of life have been destined, and they are likely to feel that their actions do not have much influence on their destiny or fate. These individuals also tend to believe in luck, and they are easily influenced by others. Consequently, they becomes less initiative, afraid to take risks, passive, apathetic, less motivated, and tend to be fatalistic: they let their fate flow. Even if they were "lucky", it would not be easy for them to maintain the luck (Kreitner & Kinichi, 2005). In line with Levenson (Anwar, 2008),

that individuals having external LOC have two kinds of aspects: Aspects of *powerful other* that makes someone believe that his life is determined by powerful persons, and aspect of chance who believes that someone's life is determined by fate, chance, and luck.

It can be concluded based on the findings shown above that most of new students of English Education Program Study mostly have internal LOC. Psychologically, an individual is considered healthy if he has internal self-control, since it is associated with the presence of self-motivation, self-control, healthy ambition and achievement. However, we can not simply judge that internal self-control is the best kind of self-control. No single LOC is categorized as the most correct one. An extreme tendency to see one self control as the most correct one is unhealthy. Both individuals with internal or external self-controls need to be realistic about anything under their control, so they can enjoy their own success or failure in mature and responsible ways.

The depression reassessment of new students of English Language Study Program of Unma Banten can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. The distribution of depressed students

Categories	Total	%	Male		Female	
			Tot	%	Tot	%
Non-depression	31	70,45	18	40,91	13	29,54
Light depression	12	27,27	4	9,09	8	18,18
Medium depression	1	2,27	0	0,00	1	2,27
Total	44	100,00	22	50,00	22	50,00

Table 3 shows that more than 70 percent of participants are not depressed and less than 30 percent were depressed. The most depressed students are at are in the category of light depression, while those with medium depression are less than 5 percent. The study found that there is no student with severe depression. Based on sex, among depressed participants (light and medium), the proportion of females is higher than males; 9 females and 4 males, or 69.23 percent: 30.77 percent

Most participants of this study are not depressed. This condition indicates that the emotions of participants are still normal. There are several possibilities concerning the

reason why these participants are not depressed. This is because most participants did not have any stimulus that may trigger depression, since the exam period (UAS) has been passed, so that they just showed adaptive responses at the time. Their experience in dealing with various problems and demands to get used to analyzing problems supports them to be solutive (active coping). Such experience impacts on the way the participants cope with problems and avoid depression. Nevertheless, there is still a small portion of participants who experienced depression, whether light or medium. Thus the university does not have to do any attempts or strategies at campus to suppress students' depression minimally.

The data collected on the level of depression in new students from English education study program are still categorized normal. Chaplin (2002) divided depression in two circumstances, depression in normal person and in pathological case. For normal people, depression is a state of melancholy (sadness, discouragement) characterized by feelings of dissatisfaction, decreased activity, and pessimism. As for pathological cases, depression is an extreme unwillingness to react to any stimulus, with a decline self value, being delusional, excessive despair.

The data in Table 3 that shows that the proportion of females who experience depression is more than males, is in line with Keltner's finding (1995) that found as much as 7.7 percent of men and 12.9 percent of women were diagnosed depressed. Epidemiological studies showed that major depression happened to women are two times more than men, or 21.3 percent and 12.7 percent respectively (Harista & Lisiswanti, 2015, p. 75). Women in productive age are more susceptible to get depressed than men in their productive age (Lépine & Briley, 2011, p. 4). Depression is a common problem experienced by everyone in the world. According to an American study, one in 20 people in the United States each year get depressed, and at least one in five people had experienced depression in their lives. Depression is a

health problem (mental) in society which is quite common and serious.

The depression of new students is also due to the social environment where they live. Based on the data, most participants still live with their parents, and they are only a few numbers of participants (18%) that chose to live in boarding rooms near the campus, as follows:

Table 4. The Domicile of New College Students

Domiciles	Male	Female	Total	%
With parents	17	19	36	82
Boarding room	5	3	8	18
Total	22	22	44	100

Based on the data shown in Table 4, it can be seen that the level of depression is also affected by surrounding environment. The surrounding environment around the campus in Pandeglang and surrounding areas, where the participants are domiciled, still stick to religious and country nuances, that is opposed to urban environment. Basic Health Research (Riskasdas) of Ministry of Health (2013, p. 129) mentions the prevalence of mental disorder is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. Wahyuningsih (2010) stated that social environment always urges individuals to meet social demands and challenges, in which it is a potential source of depression. Urban life has many demands compared to rural life that causes greater depression among the residents.

Configuration of participants' domiciles where most of them still stay with their parents, a bit much influence the fairness of the level of depression. Although it is possible that situation at home may lead to depression, but at least the condition of participants who lived with their parents do not necessarily need to prepare mentally to adapt to the new environment that is more prone to create a depression if it is not addressed properly by the individuals.

Depression can be prevented and avoided by mental and spiritual strengthening, being close to God, spending time to build relationships with parents, siblings and friends, developing new interests and

activities, engaging in daily activities that brings personal satisfaction, recognizing fear of rejection, guilt, and face the feelings and learn to cope with internal stress or relieve stress through environmental manipulation (Minirt & Meier, 2001).

The study also revealed the characteristics of LOC and students' hobbies. The questionnaire included three choices of hobbies preferred in leisure time, namely reading, listening to music and watching videos / movies, as for the genre of music, movies and books are not restricted. Hobbies options are then linked to the categories of self-control (LOC). Based on the selection made by the participants, the data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Option of Hobbies and Self-Control of New College Students

Hobbies	Total	%	Self-Controls			
			Internal		External	
			Tot	%	Tot	%
Reading	14	34,09	11	78,57	3	21,43
Watching a movie	11	25,00	5	45,45	6	54,55
listening to music	19	40,91	12	63,16	7	36,84
Total	44	100,00	28		16	

In Table 5, it appears that participants who choose to read are as many as 14 students, and more than 78 percent of them have internal self-control, and only less than 22 percent have an external self-control. For the category of hobby 'watching a movie', the result is different, that among 11 people, less than 46% of them have internal self-control while more 54 percent have external self control. There are 19 people who claimed that they love listening to music, 63 percent of them have internal self control, while the rest about less than 37 percent have external self-control.

The data as shown in Table 5 confirm a positive impact of reading on acquiring the level of self-control (LOC). These results are consistent with the results of previous study stating that habit of reading is capable of maintaining mental health, making life more meaningful and happy (Hill, 2013, p. 30), making people more empathetic to others (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013), keeping the brain's performance in a good state (Wilson et al,

2013), and lower the levels of depression (William et al, 2013).

## CONCLUSION

Most of new students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Unma Banten pose internal self-control (LOC). Those who have external LOC are more likely to experience depression compared to those with internal self-control (LOC).

The results of study showed that the proportion of women who experience depression is more than men. The results also confirm a positive impact of reading on acquiring the levels of self-control (LOC).

Depression can be prevented and avoided by mental and spiritual strengthening, such as being close to God, spending time to build relationships with parents, siblings and friends, developing new interests and activities, engaging in daily activities that brings personal satisfaction, recognizing fear of rejection and guilt.

Students who face some difficulties at school should consult (sharing) with their supervisor, so it will be easier to monitor the development of their psychological state. Students also should widen their insight, by a lot of readings, discussions and self-coping improvemnet to handle their stressors so they will not experience any further psychological disorders.

As for lecturers, especially academic lecturers (PA), it is necessary for them to enhance their role and function to always guide their students through psychological, friendly and warm approaches, and keep monitor the depression of their students.

For universities, it is important to discuss a program to reduce the level of depression experienced by the new students, through introducing them to school environment and activities, building a comfortable and representative library or park.

For the next reseachers who want to study on depression in adolescents, gender factors should be considered carefully, given

that gender affects the level of depression experienced by the late adolescents. It is also important to explore more about the relationship between interest in reading, related to types of reading and individuals' ways to depression. \*\*

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