

# Leader Career Success & Locus of Control Expectancy

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## ABSTRACT

In recognition of the fact that the world is dynamic and changing, the research re-tests the well-established relationship between internality and success, and its recognition as a trait of leaders. Contrary to some published Western academic literature, the research results conclude that higher levels of successes are achieved by individuals with an external locus of control expectancy. The research presents evidence of a shift away from a world that appreciates leaders with an ultimate self-belief of control, independence and autonomy, to leaders that appreciate external forces, and recognise the importance of connection and community. This move is triggered by feelings of loneliness, guilt and tiredness of competition when only autonomy and independence are sought. These triggers are allowing individuals not to merely seek physiological or safety needs, but to seek belongingness and deep-care needs. The implication of this change in leadership style is a move away from narcissistic leadership styles, towards servant leadership styles.

**Keywords:** Locus of control; objective career success; needs; psychological puberty

## INTRODUCTION

Locus of control is a psychological, social learning theory that refers to the extent to which individuals perceive control over their lives, and the environment (Lefcourt, 1976). Studies reveal that an individual's perception of control is related to leadership style (Adeyemi-Bello, 2001; Fusilier, Ganster & Mayes, 1987; Govindarajan, 1989; Hollenbeck, Brief, Whitener & Pauli, 1988; Mia, 1987; Storms & Spector, 1989). Research undertaken in the Western world is brimful with claims that internality (a psychological belief system of one having control over aspects of one's life and the environment) is a trait which is in common amongst successful leaders (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999; Andrisani & Nestel, 1976; Fusilier, Ganster & Mayes, 1987; Govindarajan, 1989; Hollenbeck, Brief, Whitener & Pauli, 1988; Mia 1987). However, April, Macdonald and Vriesendorp (2000: 1) state that "the illusion of control is killing us". In reference to leadership in the 21st century, April, Macdonald and Vriesendorp (2000), and Obeng (1994), claim that the perception that our environment can be regarded as predictable, consistent and forever under control is entirely incorrect. Beck and Cowan (1996) state that the worldview (Dundes, 1971; Hannah & Zatzick, 2008), value systems (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1960; Spranger, 1922), levels of psychological existence (Ryan & Deci, 2000), belief structures (Walsh, 1988), organizing principles, and thinking modes (Zhang, 20002), all transform with progress. Our world today is regarded to be a more fragile, dangerous and complex place than it has ever been (Porter, Schwab & Cornelius, 2003). This entails that leadership traits that allow for a high level for planning and control over the future may not be ideal for the 21st century. Instead, traits such as an acute ability to handle ambiguity and uncertainty, to comfortably hold multiple mental constructs, and flexibility to adapt to change, may be more important than ever before.

However, does this mean that a long studied psychological trait of leaders having an internal locus of control expectancy (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999) is rendered ineffective? Locus of control, after its introduction by Rotter in 1966, was regarded as the most popular variable in psychology in the coming 20 years (Lefcourt, 1976; Joe, 1971) and internality has been deeply rooted in the concept of individualism and autonomy (Marks, 1998; Torun & April, 2006). Is our world changing so that individuality and autonomy are not the ideal characteristics for success anymore? The research hypothesis explores the psychological factor of locus of control and its relationship with success, to judge what kind of leadership styles would be ideal for leaders in the 21st century.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ■ Career Success

In defining values, Spranger (1922) regards 'the political value' as a craving for power, and 'the economic value' as the human need for money (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1960). Since competition and struggle are a part of any choices made in life, many philosophers regard 'the political value' as the most fundamental and universal human motive (Hjelle & Ziegler, 1981). Career success is a way for individuals to fulfil their need for achievement and power (Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995). Since career succession improves the quality of life, it also

satisfies ‘the economic value’ of an individual. It is for these reasons that career success leads to competitive behaviour amongst people (Lau & Shaffer, 1999).

Career success is defined as the positive psychological outcomes, or achievements, one has accumulated as a result of experiences over the span of their working life (Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995). There are two main categories of career success: objective and subjective. Objective career success is assessed by extrinsic measures such as job title, salary or promotion. Thus, objective career success primarily targets ‘the economic’ and ‘the political’ values (Spranger, 1922). On the contrary, subjective career success is explained as one’s own appraisal of career attainment (Gattiker & Larwood, 1989; Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, 1995). Thus, subjective career success may target any values of an individual, such as ‘the aesthetic value’, ‘the religious value’ or ‘the theoretical value’ (Spranger 1922; Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1960).

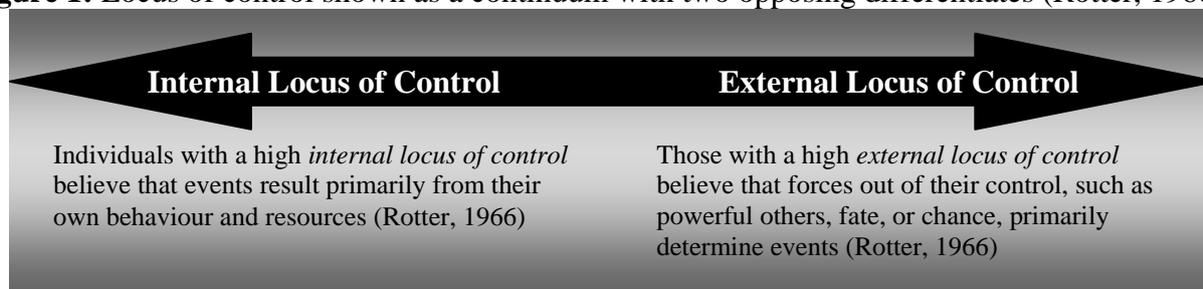
A prime example of subjective career success is stated by Ray (2006), who defines five types of wealth that human beings target: financial, physical, relational, intellectual, and spiritual. He argues that, similar to different types of values expressed by Spranger (1922) and Allport, Vernon and Lindzey (1960), people target different types of wealth. The balance of all five types of wealth allows for ‘harmonic wealth’, which is different for all individuals; thus, such success is subjective to an individual’s personal preference of balance of various values in life.

### ■ Locus of Control

Rotter (1966), who developed the construct of ‘locus of control’, used the empirical law of effect which states that people are inherently motivated to seek positive stimulation, or reinforcement, and avoid unpleasant stimulation. Rotter (1966) used Ferster and Skinner’s (1957) concept of reinforcement, which stated that if the outcomes of responses by an individual are favourable or unfavourable, then the likelihood of the operant to use the response in the future is increased or decreased respectively – this is positive and negative reinforcement. A reinforcement experienced by an individual acts directly to strengthen anticipation that a particular behaviour, or event, will be followed by that same or similar reinforcement in the future (Rotter, 1966). This anticipation of future reinforcements is regarded as expectancy. The person learns to discriminate behaviours and outcomes, and generalises these anticipations of reinforcements for the future. The generalisation of expectancies for controlling reinforcements defines and formulates one’s locus of control (Rotter, Seeman & Liverant, 1962). On this basis, Lefcourt (1976) generated a predictive formula, where he defined behaviour potential (the likelihood of engaging in a particular behaviour) as a function of expectancy (the probability that a given behaviour will lead to a particular outcome) and reinforcements (outcomes of our behaviour).

A belief of individuals about controllability over what happens to them in life is a core element of their understanding of how they live in the world (Shapiro, Schwartz & Austin 1996). Locus of control is a personality construct that reflects one’s belief or perception about who controls life and the environment (Lefcourt, 1976). The belief can exist in varying levels, reflecting the degree to which one perceives personal control in life (Connolly, 1980). Locus of control has been described as a dimension with two opposing differentiates (Lee-Kelley, 2006). The dimensions reflect the extent to which individuals believe that what happens to them is within their control, or beyond it (Carrim, Basson & Coetzee, 2007). This presents a continuum of internal-external belief system (Littunen & Storhammar, 2000) as shown in Figure 1. A mix of the two belief systems is regarded as balanced locus of control expectancy, also known as shared responsibility or bi-local expectancy (Wong & Sproule, 1984; Torun & April, 2006).

**Figure 1:** Locus of control shown as a continuum with two opposing differentiates (Rotter, 1966)



People with an internal locus of control believe that the outcomes of their actions are a result of their own personal efforts (Andrisani & Nestel, 1976), abilities (Carrim, Basson & Coetzee, 2007), or permanent characteristics (Littunen & Storhammar, 2000). They believe that hard work and personal abilities lead to positive outcomes (Carrim, Basson & Coetzee, 2007). Thus, these individuals interpret reinforcements they receive from their surroundings as contingent upon their own actions (Lee-Kelley, 2006). For internals, key links exist between behaviour and its

consequences, and the relationship between outcome and personal effort (Connolly, 1980). This belief entails that they are 'masters of their fates' (Bonne, Olffen & Witteloostuijn, 2005).

People with a belief in internal control are more likely to change their behaviour following a positive or negative reinforcement, than people with a belief in external control. However, for behaviour change to occur, the reinforcement must be of value to the person (Marks, 1998). The belief in the existence of a strong causal-effect relationship between their actions and outcome allows them to make an effort to change their behaviour and actions in order to change the outcome.

People with an external locus of control believe that their own actions are dependent on factors outside their personal control (Landy & Conte, 2004; Martin, Thomas, Charles, Epitropaki & McNamara, 2005). The consequences of behaviour are randomly administered, and are thought to be controlled by outside forces such as: chance, fate, luck, powerful others, or societal imperatives (Connolly, 1980).

Levenson (1973) presented a multi-dimensional view of locus of control that separated external control into: control by powerful others, and control by chance and luck. Belief in control by powerful others can be due to an individual belief of being physically or intellectually weak in relation to others around him or her. Therefore, for these individuals, externality is defined due to the competitive environment. On the contrary, a belief in luck or fate may be accompanied by a mindset that luck is on the individual's side or against him or her. Optimistic or pessimistic, the individual will be described as external (Hersch & Scheibe, 1967)

Externals are reluctant to change behaviour, as they do not see it as a primary source for altering reinforcements (Marks, 1998). Even in the case of positive reinforcement, the credit may not be taken personally, but reflected upon as ease of task, luck or as a result of a helpful hand by a powerful other (Hyatt & Prawitt, 2001).

#### ■ **Locus of Control and Success**

With its basis in reinforcement, locus of control directly affects behaviour and performance (Lee-Kelley, 2006). An individual's locus of control expectancy allows reinforcement to be attributed to four possible factors: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck (Weiner, Frieze, Kulka, Reed, Rest & Rosenbaum, 1971). While ability and effort are regarded as success factors by internals, external factors of task difficulty and luck are regarded as success determinants by externals (Lee-Kelley, 2006).

Kalechstein and Nowicki (1994) concluded that an internal locus of control is related to greater academic achievement; thus, academic success. However, academic success does not guarantee success in the workplace. Nonetheless, an expectancy that effort leads to success is a crucial element in generating initiative to work, which can lead to career success. The stronger the perceived relationship between initiative and success, the more worthwhile initiative becomes, and the more likely it is to be demonstrated (Andrisani & Nestel, 1976). This translates into a belief of personal control of rewards and outcomes. In the case of a negative reinforcement, these individuals persist that failure is a result of a lack of effort on their part; therefore, one must try harder to bring about a successful outcome. This makes internals proactive (Covey, 1993) and hard working in order to achieve their goals, which means that these goals are more likely to be achieved by these individuals (Lee-Kelley, 2006).

The link between internal locus of control and successful management may be explained by the fact that individuals with an internal locus of control have faith in their ability to achieve self-appointed objectives (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999) and to transform the environment (Andrisani & Nestel, 1976; Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999). They feel personally responsible for the job's success, and when something backfires, it is attributed to inadequate participation on their part in their own failure to steer the team properly (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999). On the contrary, externals attribute success and failure to factors such as luck, coincidence, fate, or the influence of people stronger than themselves (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999). Externals are less attracted to achievement-related tasks, since failure is more likely to be attributed to the nature of the task and luck (Lee-Kelley, 2006).

Similarly to success, in respect of leadership, Hiers and Heckel (1977), Anderson and Schneier (1978), and Mc Cullough, Ashbridge and Pegg (1994) all reported that successful leaders were endowed with a high internal locus of control, whereas less successful ones typically had a low internal locus of control

## METHODOLOGY

#### ■ **Primary Approach: Questionnaire**

The researchers used an on-line self-administered questionnaire (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003) which was completed by the respondents, and the results were compiled electronically. The choice of the type of questionnaire employed was driven by several considerations, prominent among which were: cost, time, and assurance that the responses were from the intended respondents.

Andrisani and Nestel (1976) list the non-personality variables that influence the level of success that is held by an individual in their profession. Their study ranked education as a highly influential variable. Thus, to potentially target a consistent level of education for the participants, the sampling methodology targeted only the alumni of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Cape Town (South Africa).

#### ■ **Measuring Locus of Control Expectancy**

Rotter's (1966) internal-external scale tests locus of control expectancy using 29 questions, six of which are filler questions and are not included in measuring locus of control expectancy. Each question has two options for the participant to choose from: one option expresses a typical attitude of individuals with an internal locus of control expectancy, and the other indicative of attitude of individuals with an external expectancy. This choice represents an extreme option, and the participants are asked to choose the option which they more strongly believe in (Lefcourt, 1976), or the option that is closest to their preference (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999). One point is scored for each external option; thus, the higher the score, the more external the individual is regarded.

Klockars and Varnum's (1975) examined the polarity of the two choices for the questions in Rotter's (1966) internal-external scale to conclude validity for 11 out of the 23 questions as directly opposing options for the questions. Furthermore, Adeyemi-Bello's (2001) study concluded that 23 items were too many to measure one construct. It is potentially for the above reasons that Andrisani and Nestel (1976) used an 11 item abbreviated version of Rotter's (1966) internal-external control scale for their research. In light of this assessment by previous researchers, the 11 item abbreviated scale was used for measuring locus of control expectancy of the participants.

#### ■ **Measuring Success**

Klein and Wasserstein-Warnet (1999) in their research used two evaluator appraisals to classify success under three ratings: highly successful, moderately successful, and unsuccessful in accordance with criteria established by specialists for the Ministry of Education. A similar method is used to calculate objective career success of MBA graduates. Instead of the criteria from the Ministry of Education, the Financial Times (FT) rating scale for MBA courses is used as an appropriate reference. The FT rating scale calculates, amongst other variables, the level of success of the graduates as a means for ranking business schools around the world. In reference to this scale, objective career success can be viewed in terms of: salary, career progress and aims achieved. Thus, the questionnaire included questions regarding salary brackets and job titles to estimate career progress. Personal aims achieved targets subjective career success; thus, this item was not included in the questionnaire.

#### ■ **Secondary Approach: Written Personal Reflections of Research Participants**

The research undertook a through analysis of the documents written by the research participants on their personal reflections regarding their locus of control expectancies. The analysis was conducted using specialist software, AtlasTI. This analysis was used to further validate the survey results and increased the richness of the research insights (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2003).

Permission from 38 full-time MBA students and 25 modular students were obtained. Thus, a total of 63 personal reflections were analysed for the research. These insights were documented after review of the concept of locus of control by the participants. The understanding of the concept by each participant was validated by the researchers, which is essential for reliability of the self-reflection documents. These reflections were used in the research to identify the common stumbling blocks to achieving success for the participants.

#### ■ **Data Analysis**

Both the variables, locus of control and objective career success, are regarded not to be normally distributed, and to be ordinal (Utts & Heckard, 2007). Normal data is described as a smooth curve that resembles a bell when connecting the tops of the bars on a histogram (Utts & Heckard, 2007). Ordinal data are those which the assigned number reflects a particular order or sequence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). Both the variables are assumed not to be normal due to the total number of responses received, and the sampling methodology that potentially allows for greater number of internals being included in the sample. For data which is not normally distributed, and is ordinal, the Spearman Rank Correlation test presented an appropriate hypothesis test to be used for the research question.

A total of 68 responses were received to the questionnaire from a variety of internationally located respondents. The entire sample (n=68) was used for the Spearman Rank Correlation test for locus of control and income level, and 66 responses (n=66) were used for the Spearman Rank Correlation test of locus of control and job title, as two participants did not provide their job title.

In light of the sampling methodology, the study does not presume to be representative for the world population in general. The sample potentially represents a sub-group of the population that is more academic and educated. The need for higher education for success in the commercial world is evident (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998; Van Dyk, Nel, Van Zloedoff

& Haasbroek, 2001; Wilson, 1999). Thus, it was hoped that the population captured by the questionnaire had greater potential for securing high-level management positions, and included people either currently in management roles, or those with the potential for management roles.

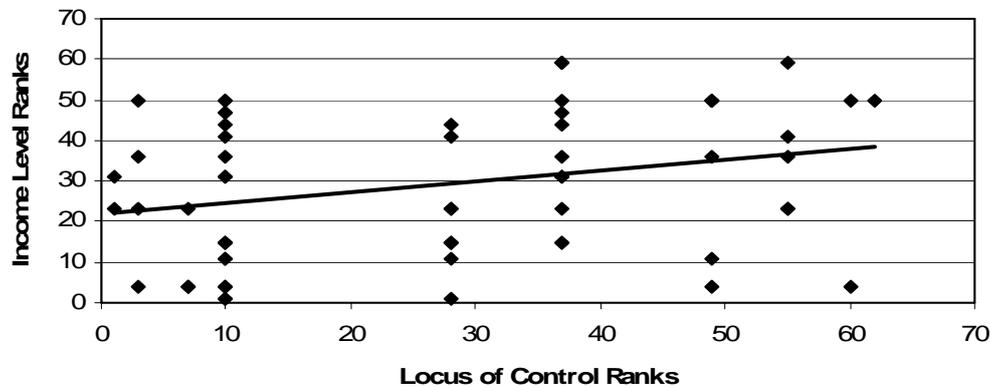
## FINDINGS

**Table 1:** Spearman Rank Correlation results for income level and job title

Variable against Locus of Control	Sample size: n	Correlation coefficient	Significance level
Income level	62	0.246	10%
Job title	60	0.087	-

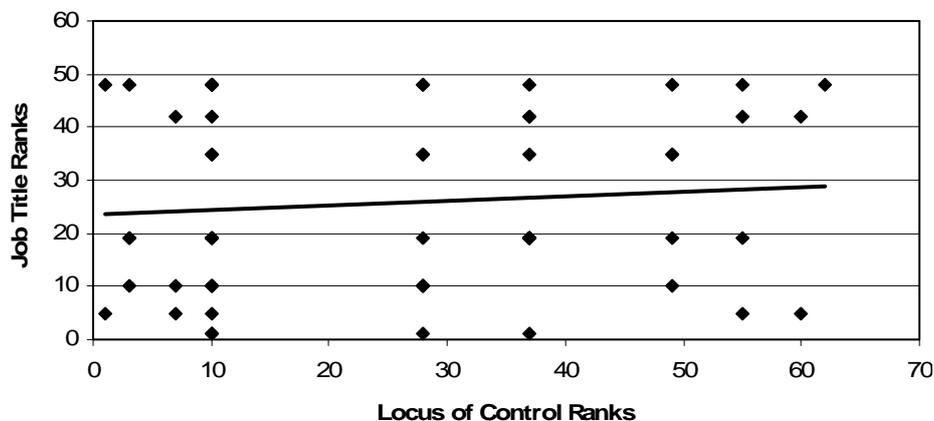
The Spearman Rank Correlation results reveal a coefficient 0.246, which presents statistically significant proof at the 10% level of significance that a positive relationship exists between locus of control and income level. While literature overwhelmingly supports the concept that internality contributes to personal success, the results for the relationship between locus of control and income level illustrate a positive relationship. This means that contrary to some published Western academic literature, externals are more likely to have higher income than internally-oriented individuals (at least in the case of our research sample).

**Figure 2:** Spearman Rank Correlation graph for locus of control against income  
**Locus of Control and Income Level**



Similarly to the results for income level and locus of control, the results for job title and locus of control reveal a positive correlation of 0.087. The result is not statistically significant in establishing the relationship; nonetheless, the positive correlation adds to the confidence in the results obtained in respect of locus of control and income level. The results reveal externality to be linked with higher objective career success.

**Figure 3:** Spearman Rank Correlation graph for locus of control against job title  
**Locus of Control and Job Title**



Externals regard success to be attributed to external factors. One research participant stated: “I do believe God is in control of all things and He is above all and the ultimate reason for all my successes” (42:1). Another participant with an external locus of control admitted: “If I am unsuccessful, it is difficult to admit I created the circumstances” (37:9).

Research participants with a mix of internal and external locus of control expectancy recognised a combination of internal and external factors as the reasons for their success in life. For

example, one research participant recognised that other factors may be at play in achieving success, or for failing, by stating: “It is difficult to continually uphold the belief that I manifest all of my own successes, and that everything in my life is present because I invited it in” (37:10). One research participant stated this belief by: “... hard work alone is no guarantee of success” (8:15), thus recognises the need for internal factors, such as personal effort, as well as external factors, that contribute to success.

On the contrary, internals regard themselves to be wholly responsible for successes and failures in their life. One research participant declares: “... the degree of success is completely in my control” (7:5). The high level of self-esteem of internals can potentially be narcissistic. Statements such as: “My locus of control is good” (16:2), and “I simply do not have any blockers to my locus of control that I can relate to” (6:2) reflect such thinking and subsequent behaviour.

Thus, the beliefs regarding the factors that lead to an individual’s success ranged from internal factors, a mix of internal factors and external factors, and wholly to external factors by individuals with internal, bi-local, and external locus of control expectancy respectively. This was a predictable result obtained from the analysis in respect of the academic literature.

However, none of the research participants regarded a shift to externality, or maintenance of their externality, as a means for improving their level of success in the future. Most research participants stated that they wish to be more internal to be more successful. One research participant states: “Ways of enhancing my internal Locus of Control ... I will always believe that no-one else holds the key to my success ... I will always be optimistic and find ways to achieve, instead of just hoping that things will fall together” (6:15). Similarly, another research participant states the importance of internality for success by the comment: “In order for me to be successful, I need to have an increased self-awareness to imagine, despite my circumstances, where I want to be and then take control over getting there” (47:15).

The lack of recognition by the research participants that externality may lead to success inhibits the potential of an analysis of factors that may attribute greater success to externals. However, some reliance can be placed by analysis of the stumbling blocks of internal individuals in assessing failings of internals, which may translate to an inability to achieve higher levels of success as compared to those achieved by externals. These failings or stumbling blocks of internals are discussed below.

#### ■ **Assuming Too Much Responsibility That Leads to Stress Causing Poor Performance at Work**

High stress levels are widely acknowledged to be a cause for poor well-being, and for poor performance in the workplace (Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert & Hatfield, 2006). Analysis of the self reflection documents reveals that internals, by attributing the responsibility of the outcome to their own actions rather than attributing responsibility to the environmental or other external factors, perceive a very high level of responsibility upon themselves which, in turn, can be severely stressful. This is explained by one research participant as: “My biggest stumbling block being internal locus of control is stress. My awareness of being responsible and accountable for myself generates stress” (14:3). Similarly, with regard to excess responsibility, another research participant stated: “I take responsibility and feel accountable in situations beyond my control, and should sometimes be more kind towards myself and [less] self-punitive” (21:4). This high level of responsibility for all happenings in one’s life is regarded by one research participant as: “Unrealistic expectation of what outcomes can realistically be influenced” (11:10), which can lead to “potential for distress and emotional breakdowns as a result of assuming too much responsibility” (25:7).

Furthermore, taking on too much responsibility for one’s self and the environment causes one to be very critical of oneself and accountable for every outcome. This, yet again, causes stress for the individual, which is expressed by one of the research participants as: “A feeling of guilt might sometimes come with it, causing sleepless nights and stress” (25:8). One research participant confirms that as an internal: “... you can be too hard on yourself” (26:4). Yet another research participant stated: “I am rather critical with myself, which correlates with my tendency of performing internally” (22:7).

While blaming others can be a stumbling block for externals, not having any external factor to blame can cause an inability to present oneself with any external escape route or defences in the case of poor performance. One research participant explained: “I am quick to blame myself for my lack of achievement” (27:3). Another research participant stated: “Not blaming others for our present circumstances is another stumbler” (31:2); thus, emphasising the importance of availability of scapegoats for avoiding stress.

#### ■ **Fear of Change Leading to Low Level of Innovation and Creativity**

Research participants with an internal locus of control acknowledge the fear of change as a potential stumbling block. This is highlighted by one research participant who stated that he was: “... fearful of what new developments change will bring” (11:9), and that may potentially make internals, in general, more rigid, inflexible, and resistant to change. With ever-increasing levels of change in the world in terms of technology, diversity and globalisation, to name a few (Beck & Cowan, 1996; Obeng, 1994; Porter, Schwab & Cornelius, 2003), a reluctance to change may

be seen as a potential cause for lower success levels. Another research participant states: “I have acknowledged my inability to effect changes in my life as a stumbling block” (35:3); thus, recognising the inability to change as a hindrance in attaining success in life.

#### ■ **Missing Opportunities as Influences of Others Are Ignored**

Williams and Warchall (1999, p. 273) advocate that the relinquishing of control, and allowing fate to intervene, can lead to outcomes that are more wondrous and varied than could be expected. In accordance with this view, one research participant in reflecting upon her internality accepts her: “... limitation to identify and take on opportunities that arise suddenly” (25:5). This potentially does not allow the research participant the level of success as could be attained by someone more open to opportunities that arise in life. Over-planning, and having a strict path of action, potentially inhibits recognition of any other external factors in presenting opportunities.

Poynton (2006) regards luck as ‘offers’ that arise as opportunities. One research participant recognises fate as a contributor to his success, by stating: “In my life I have had instances where external locus of control has played a role. Once I bought shares on the Nairobi Stock Exchange and a few days after the purchase the company declared a bonus and the share price shot up very quickly. I have always wanted to get a mobile phone dealership. It just happened that in the course of a conversation, a client just inquired [as to] whether I knew anyone who wanted a mobile dealership. Whether it is luck, fate or whatever, but today I own a mobile phone dealership” (59:1). The research participant emphasises the importance of allowing external forces to present opportunities in order to achieve success.

#### ■ **Lack of Trust Leading to An Inability to Benefit from Others’ Strengths**

An overwhelming majority of the internals express their inability to trust people as one of their primary stumbling blocks. The lack of trust in others, in reference to locus of control, is described as ‘distrust of outside resources’ by Wong and Sproule (1984). Selart (2005) points out that being afraid to trust others is actually a fear of losing control. In reflection of this, one research participant in the locus of control analysis recites: “... fear of losing control is hindering my trust in others and outside influences” (56:5). Another research participant expressed: “Fear of relying on others so [I] assume responsibility for control and outcomes” (11:12), emphasising the fact that this fear is a trigger for internals to try to take control.

This fear can be so immense that a lack of trust can be projected to entire communities and societies. One research participant stated: “I find it very difficult to trust people and I don’t trust most of the people around me” (16:6). In recognition of this stumbling block, one research participant expresses the outrage of the research participant’s own lack of trust by stating: “It shocks me how much disbelief in others I have developed” (22:2); thus, recognising this lack of trust as a potential area of development in the research participant’s character.

In addition to the above, one research participant extends his inability to benefit from other people, specifically referring to a particular race group. The research participant describes this as: “... disregarding their [other people’s] knowledge, experience and competencies, [rather] than to open my mind to new possibility horizons” (25:4). This limitation can seriously handicap an individual in succeeding in a world, where specialisation and division of labour has allowed for major benefits from economies of scale (Hartzeberg, 2005) and blocks off the individual from the richness that multiculturalism brings (April & Shockley, 2007).

#### ■ **Difficulties Working in Groups and with Other People due to Narcissistic Behaviour**

With regards to group situations, a lack of trust can lead to increased self-projected responsibility upon oneself, which is a cause for stress for internals. One research participant, in reference to group work, stated: “I will step in and take control because I trust myself to meet deadlines” (23:2). This handicap is clearly expressed by one research participant as: “I sometimes doubt the abilities of people in my team, and so I take control of outcomes” (10:6). In contrast, a research participant with bi-local expectancy states: “... where I am working with a number of people. If they have attempted to solve a problem and cannot, because I trust them, I usually accept the result” (38:2).

The presence of an internal in a group can present the group with a potential destructive narcissist in the team (Jacoby, 1990; Brown, 2002). Such a team member is destructive for the team; thus, decreasing the chances of success (Kets de Vries, 1995; Kets de Vries, 2001). One research participant, in presenting an example of teamwork, stated that he: “... questioned whether people’s standards were as high as my own” (2:3). Another research participant clearly stated: “I sometimes doubt the abilities of people in my team ... whether it is equal to my abilities” (10:6). A lack of trust can lead to an inability to work in teams. This is expressed by one internal research participant as: “I would much rather work alone, with complete autonomy and control” (45:2). It need not be emphasised that team working is vastly crucial for achieving success in today’s world. One research participant stated: “Depending on the [situation] ... other people have always hugely frustrated me” (47:2). Such an inability to work with others is a potential stumbling block to success for internals.

In addition, internals in their self reflection documents claim that they may not allow others to perform by being: “... quick to take over, rather than find ways to enable someone else to

solve a situation” (11:4). The lack of recognition of the power of other people is illustrated by another research participant who stated that he: “... fails to recognise unpredictable, un-plannable elements such as human response to change, and this often results in failure” (25:6). This research participant clearly connects this lack of empathetic recognition of others to a lack of success. In highlighting times when internals try to enable others to solve a problem, they may undermine the power of the others, one research participant states that his behaviour bears: “... risk of consciously or unconsciously manipulating others” (25:2), due to his internality.

#### ■ **Unfriendliness Leading to Superficial Networking rather than Establishing Meaningful Relationships**

In analysing the reasons why internals may potentially achieve less success than individuals with an external locus of control expectancy, a few research participants state their lack of openness and friendliness as a potential stumbling block. One research participant states: “I am friendly, yet guarded. I know this is one of my defence mechanisms, strongly related to a sense of connectedness, whereby I consciously keep a distance between myself and others in an attempt to avoid the pain of a potential rejection, or the complication of emotional intimacy” (11:8). This lack of intimacy, “Not giving enough of myself to other people”(18:5) and “not being transparent” (26:5) has the potential for establishing superficial relationships and networks which has the bearings of inhibiting people to strive for their best potentials for such a leader. Thus, this may bear consequences on success levels.

The impact of lack of trust as a stumbling block for internals comes into play in both personal and professional life. One research participant stated: “My constant desire to control my personal destiny has resulted in me not trusting others with issues related to my well-being – whether professionally or privately” (45:5). In respect of personal life and relationships, Covey (1991, p. 65) states that the need to control another person disappears the very moment that we learn to truly trust him or her. Upon reflection of personal relationships, one research participant in analysing her single status emphasises internality as a stumbling block to relationships by stating: “A prospective partner thus has to break down a lot of defences and has to really convince me of his trustworthiness before I will even consider entering into the most basic level of commitment” (41:4).

## **DISCUSSION**

While an overwhelming majority of academic literature emphasises the importance of internality for success, the results obtained from this research (sample) conflict this view. With respect to the results obtained, it is important to theorise why externality may bear traits of a potential leader in today’s world. This is done using three theories: Jung’s (2003) theory of psychological puberty, Maslow’s (1950) theory of hierarchy of needs, and Beck and Cowan’s (1996) concept of Spiral Dynamics. These are explained in detail below.

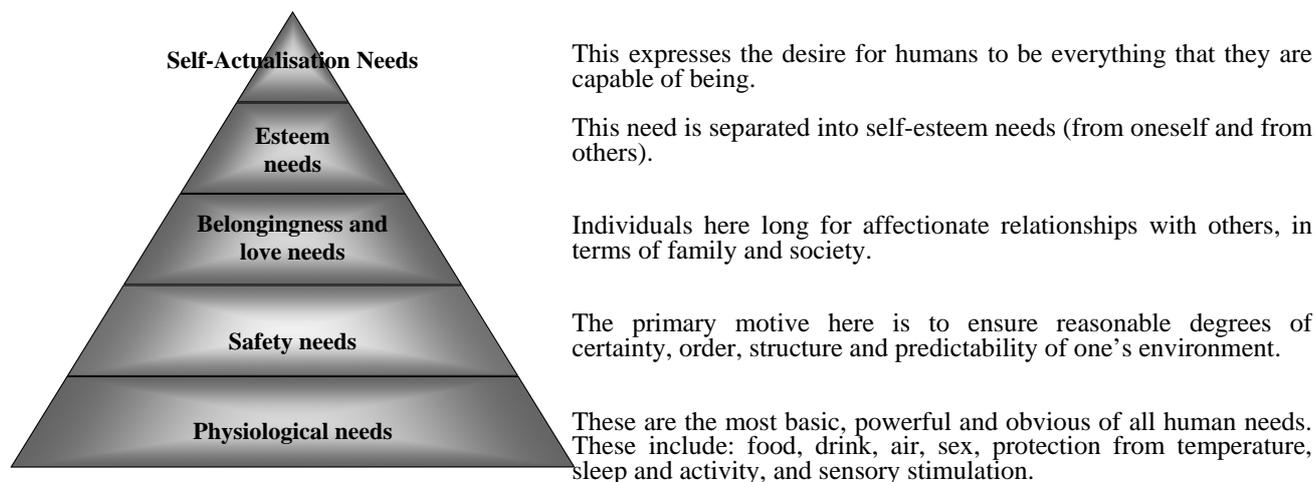
Jung (2003) states that a girl of 20 is usually older than a man of 25, as far as maturity of judgement is concerned. Jung (2003) concludes that with many men of 25, the period of psychological puberty is not yet over. Psychological puberty is defined as a period of illusion and only partial responsibility. This partial responsibility ignores responsibility towards others, and emphasises personal development, even at the expense of others. This phase is important for the development of personality as acquiescence and passivity at this age can be harmful, because they are potential obstacles to valuable experience. In order to maximise these experiences, the individual would face a very high level of self-involvement, and may expose a disregard towards others. Such internal focus may result in a high level of personal success, which is potentially what is reported by previous Western-dominated literature with regards to internality. It is possible that this stage of psychological puberty in men, when reinforced by success (Kilduff & Day, 1994), can prolong this stage of psychological puberty in some individuals, increasing their level of internality, and allowing them to bear characteristics of narcissists. It may be for the above reasons that the commercial environment, that presents the best arena for fulfilling economic and political values of individuals, is brimful with male leaders and allows for greater success for men, and encourages establishment of only superficial relationships and networks.

In this developmental stage, the individuals mostly operate at fulfilling physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1950). Maslow (1950) depicted the human being as a ‘wanting animal’, which rarely reaches a state of complete satisfaction. He proposed that human desires are innate, and that they are arranged in ascending hierarchy of potency and priority. During psychological puberty, the individuals aspire to satisfy the most basic, powerful and obvious of all human needs. These include: food, drink, air, sex, protection from temperature, sleep and activity, and sensory stimulation. Physiological needs include the need embedded in the instinctive motive for men to acquire high number of sexual partners (Jung, 2003), so as to spread their own gene pool (Darwin, 1936). In addition to physiological needs, another primary motive is to ensure reasonable degrees of certainty, order, structure and predictability of one’s environment. These two needs best describe



the characteristics of individuals with an internal locus of control, since it is the search for certainty, order, structure and predictability that leads internals to try to gain control over situations.

**Figure 4:** Maslow's (1950) hierarchy of needs



The above theories by Jung (2003) and Maslow (1950) describe the psyche of an individual. However, Corlett and Pearson (2003) claim that literature in psychology about individual psyche can be used to understand the psyche of groups. This group may be communities, societies, cities, countries and also the world at large. Thus, the progress and development of any community can be traced back to the psychological needs addressed in Maslow's (1950) hierarchy of needs.

With respect to the world today, Beck and Cowen (1996), similar to the hierarchy of needs, illustrate the progression of needs of different societies in the world using spiral dynamics. This concept theorises complexity of the world using the vMEME concept. "vMEME reflects world view, valuing system, a level of psychological existence, a belief structure, an organising principle, a way of thinking or a mode of adjustment" (Beck & Cowen, 1996, p. 4).

The fifth vMEME, orange, similar to the first four is again reflective of traits of internality, characterised by a high level of self-drive and a focus for individuals in society to make things better for themselves. This stage is marked by Maslow's (1950) stage of safety needs, where the primary motive is to ensure reasonable degrees of certainty, order, structure and predictability of one's environment. The orange vMEME postulates an internal locus of control as ideal for bearing traits of a leader.

The move from fifth to sixth vMEME (orange to green) reflects a move away from "autonomy and independence" (Beck & Cowan, 1996, p. 244). Marks (1998) states that it is the individualistic states, which emphasise autonomy and independence, that place more emphasis on internality. Hence, if the world vMEME is moving away from such needs, then the traits of internals may not be best suited for leadership. The move from orange to green requires leaders to move from a "sense of unlimited self and limitless possibilities" to "reading what is happening to others, assessing emotions, and making the right moves ... that ... exudes warmth and camaraderie" (Beck & Cowan, 1996, p. 257). This move from unlimited self can be regarded as a move away from narcissism. A move towards recognition of others is harmonious with a move from being internally-focused to recognising and appreciating external forces, particularly the dimension of powerful others, connection and belonging.

**Table 2:** Spiral dynamics phases

Orange Phase	Problems faced in orange causing pressures to move to green phase	Green Phase
Autonomy and independence	Loneliness	Promote a sense of unity and community
Play to win and enjoy competition	Tiredness of competition	Explore inner being of self and others
Progress through search of best solutions	Questioning the definition of progress	Liberate humans from greed and dogma
Enhance living through science and technology	Recognising damage to external factors, e.g., nature	Refresh spirituality and being in harmony
Seeking material abundance	Guilt	Sharing of society's resources

In reference to the hierarchy of needs (Maslow 1950), achieving physiological and safety needs may require an internal locus of control, where accountability to oneself is needed for success. As an individual or world vMEME progresses to belongingness and love needs, there is a need to recognise and accept external influences of powerful others. This is because, at this level, the individual's or society's want can only be satisfied by external forces, and not by internal ones only.

## SUMMARY

World views, valuing systems, level of psychological existence, belief structures, organising principles, ways of thinking, and modes of adjustment (described as VMEMEs by Beck & Cowen, 1996) are changing, and becoming more complex than ever before. In light of this, the characteristics that were ideal for a leader in the past may not be ideal traits for leaders today, or in the future (particularly as more regions like Asia and Africa, where externally-focused cultures are in abundance, start taking control of larger and larger sections of the global economy and political voice). Western academic literature vastly regards internality as an ideal trait for success for leaders (Klein & Wasserstein-Warnet, 1999; Lee-Kelly, 2006). In light of the results of this research, externality is revealed as a significant influence upon success.

This can be explained by the fact that the world is changing from a place where societies and individuals needed autonomy and independence to allow for physiological and safety needs to be met, to becoming more united/connected where societies need leaders to bear a strong sense of belongingness and love (Maslow, 1950; Beck & Cowen, 1996). This move away from wanting an unlimited-self can be regarded as a move away from psychological puberty (Jung, 2003). A move towards empathetic recognition of others is harmonious with a move from being internally-focused to recognising and appreciating external forces. A belief system of “taking blame when things go wrong” (April, Macdonald & Vriesendorp, 2000, p. 1), which is a known trait of internals, in today’s age, is excessively stressful due to the unpredictable world environment. This belief, of an unpredictable world, leads to “death of all creative planning” (April, Macdonald & Vriesendorp, 2000, p. 2).

The primary reasons for failings of internals discovered are:

- Assuming too much responsibility that leads to stress causing poor performance at work;
- Fear of change leading to low level of innovation and creativity;
- Missing opportunities as influences of others is ignored;
- Lack of trust leading to an inability to benefit from others’ strengths;
- Difficulties in working in groups and with other people due to narcissistic behaviour; and,
- Unfriendliness leading to superficial networking rather than establishing meaningful relationships.

With regards to the changing world that is resulting in success for externals, better leadership is potentially offered by those that recognise external forces at play, and use these forces to lead effectively. Thus, the 21st century marks a move away from success of the narcissistic transactional leadership style, to a move towards success for transformational/stewardship/servant leadership styles.

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