

Research Paper

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

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### ABSTRACT

The term self-concept is a general term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives themselves. To be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself. The present study focused on the evaluation of self-concept of high school girls studying in single and mixed gender schools of Nagpur city. For the study, a total of 100 students i.e. 50 single gender school girls and 50 mixed gender school girls of two English medium schools with age group of 12-15 years, mean age being 13.5 years were selected as samples and information was collected from them using the CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE (CSCS) by Dr. S.P. Ahluwalia (Haridwar). The English Version of the test was used. The collected raw data was converted statistically with the help of 't-test'. The results from the study reveal that girls studying in single gender schools have greater self-concept as compared to girls studying in mixed gender schools. The significant mean difference is found to be 5.92 which is significant at 0.01 level (\*p=0.01).

**Keywords:** *self-concept, single gender school, mixed gender school, adolescents*

Self-concept refers to the way an individual thinks about, evaluates, and perceives themselves. It involves the awareness of one's own identity and forms the foundation for how we relate to the world around us. Having a sense of self means being conscious of our own existence and the traits that make us unique. It is this understanding that helps us define our values, choices, behaviour, and overall personality.

The development of self-concept takes place in stages. One of the earliest aspects is known as the existential self, which is the realization that the individual is separate from others and remains the same over time. This awareness usually begins during infancy. Even simple interactions, such as when a baby smiles and receives a smile in return, or touches a toy and observes it move, contribute to this early understanding of self.

Following the existential awareness, children begin to develop what is called the categorical self. This means they start to identify themselves using categories, similar to how they classify other people and objects. These may include age, gender, physical features, or abilities. For example, a child may say "I am a girl" or "I am five years old." During the

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## **Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions**

early years, these categories are often based on visible and concrete characteristics, but as the child grows, they begin to include psychological traits, emotional states, and social comparisons in their self-descriptions.

A commonly accepted view is that self-concept is made up of several interconnected components. These include how one sees themselves, which is referred to as self-image, how much worth they assign to themselves, known as self-esteem or self-worth, and the person they ideally want to become, often referred to as the ideal self. These three elements work together and influence how the individual experiences the world and how they respond to challenges and feedback.

Social factors play a significant role in shaping one's self concept. The way others, especially important figures like parents, teachers, and peers, react to an individual can strongly influence how they view themselves. Moreover, people tend to form their self-concept by comparing themselves with others, taking on social roles, and identifying with specific groups or communities. These roles and relationships help people understand what is expected of them and offer a framework within which they define themselves.

As people grow older, their self-descriptions shift from being focused on individual personality traits to being more connected to their social roles and responsibilities. A younger person might define themselves as being curious, creative, or shy, while older individuals often identify themselves through the roles they play, such as being a student, a team leader, or a sibling.

The difference between the ways a person sees themselves in the present and the way they would like to be can affect how much value they assign to themselves. If there is a major gap between the real self and the ideal self, this may lead to feelings of frustration or low self-esteem. On the other hand, when there is a strong alignment between the two, the individual may feel confident, fulfilled, and motivated. This balance or imbalance between self-image and ideal self is often described in terms of congruence and incongruence.

Another related concept is self-awareness, which refers to the conscious understanding of one's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. Self-awareness is essential for the development of a realistic and stable self-concept. Without being aware of one's internal states, it becomes difficult to accurately assess one's strengths, limitations, and goals.

In the process of personal growth, people strive to become the best version of themselves. This desire to reach one's full potential is often described as the journey toward self-actualization. When a person's experiences align with their inner values and goals, they are more likely to experience congruence and psychological wellbeing. However, this process is deeply influenced by life experiences, social relationships, and the extent to which individuals receive acceptance and support from those around them.

During middle childhood, typically between the ages of seven and eleven, children begin to form a clearer picture of their place within social groups. They start comparing themselves with peers more frequently, become more concerned with how others see them, and begin developing a stronger sense of both their real and ideal selves. Their self-descriptions also become more detailed, balanced, and based on their abilities rather than only on surface

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

traits. This stage marks the beginning of a more stable and complex self-concept, where personal identity becomes closely linked with social belonging and emotional development. In summary, self-concept is a dynamic and multifaceted understanding of oneself that continues to develop throughout life. It plays a crucial role in shaping emotional wellbeing, behaviour, motivation, and social relationships. Exploring how different environments contribute to the development of self-concept, especially during sensitive phases like adolescence, offers valuable insights into personal growth and psychological adjustment.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Lee and Bryk (1986) examined the impact of single-sex secondary education and found statistically significant benefits for girls in terms of academic achievement, self-concept, future educational aspirations, and reduced sex-role stereotyping. Their study highlighted that all-girls' schools fostered more positive academic attitudes and peer relationships, likely due to the absence of social pressures from male peers. They emphasized adolescence as a critical period for self-image formation, suggesting that the supportive environment of single-sex schools allows girls to develop stronger academic confidence and healthier self-perceptions.
2. Granleese and Joseph (1993) investigated self-perceptions among girls in single-sex and coeducational schools across five domains: physical appearance, behavior, academics, social acceptance, and athletics. While global self-worth showed no significant difference, domain-specific variations emerged—coed schoolgirls scored higher in appearance, athletics, and social acceptance, whereas single-sex schoolgirls reported higher academic competence and behavioral conduct. The researchers suggested that single-sex settings may reduce rigid gender roles, promoting greater academic and social freedom.
3. Salamone (2006) found that single-sex classes may enhance self-confidence and broaden interests, particularly among adolescent girls who reported greater comfort, increased teacher interaction, and more positive attitudes toward subjects like math and science. For boys, single-sex settings were linked to increased interest in traditionally female-dominated fields like nursing, potentially due to reduced societal pressure. Overall, Salamone suggests that single-sex education fosters a non-stereotypical environment conducive to learning.
4. Huang and Zhang (2010) explored the relationship between self-efficacy, self-esteem, and affect among Chinese adolescents. They found that boys reported higher self-efficacy, while girls exhibited greater susceptibility to both positive and negative affect in shaping their self-esteem. The study highlights how girls' self-perceptions are more influenced by external factors and emotional responses compared to boys.
5. Lee and Marks (1990) examined the long-term effects of single-sex schooling on attitudes and outcomes. They found that women from single-sex schools had higher educational aspirations and were more likely to attend selective four-year colleges compared to those from coeducational schools.
6. Single-sex environments do affect the students differently than coed schools; however, the effects are more dramatic when it comes to girls (Lee & Bryk, 1986). Some pre-existing research which examined the effects of attending coed and single-sex schools determined that girls benefited a great deal more from the single-sex environment than boys did (Marsh, 1989).

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

### *Rationale*

The purpose of the current study was to compare the self-concept of high school girls in single-gender and co-educational settings. Previous research reveals mixed findings and has mostly focused on academic achievement rather than other aspects of self-concept. Many factors influence girls' school experiences, including puberty-related hormonal changes, increased self-consciousness, and the growing awareness of the opposite sex. High school is a critical phase where students shape their identities and manage academic stress, peer relationships, and gender roles—all of which impact self-concept.

Gender roles, when imposed early, can significantly shape self-perception. As students transition from elementary to high school, self-concept becomes crucial for peer adjustment and understanding emotional intelligence. This phase places immense pressure on girls, making them highly sensitive to peer perceptions. Given this, the rising popularity of single-sex schools and ongoing debates about their benefits for girls' self-concept warrant further exploration. The present study focuses on how school type correlates with various domains of self-concept in high school girls.

### *Problem, Objective and Hypotheses*

#### **Problem:**

- Do high school girls studying in single gender and mixed gender schools differ from each other in Self-Concept?
- Does self-concept of high school girls studying in single gender and mixed gender schools differ from each other significantly?
- Does type of school have any effect on the self-concept of high school girls?

#### **Objective:**

- To examine and evaluate the self-concept of high school girls studying in mixed gender and single gender schools.
- To assess the effect of type of school on the self-concept of high school girls.

#### **Hypotheses:**

1. Girls studying in mixed gender schools and single gender schools differ significantly on Self-Concept.
2. Girls studying in single gender schools will have higher Self-Concept as compared to the girls studying in mixed gender schools.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample:*

For the present study, the sample consisted of 100 high school girl students with equal number of girls studying in a Mixed Gender school (50) and Single Gender school (50) from Nagpur City. Their age group varies from 12 to 15 years, the mean age being 13.5 years.

**Research design:** Between Group Design

### *Variables:*

- **Independent variable-** Type of School (Mixed and Single Gender)
- **Dependent variable-** Self-Concept

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

### ***Tool Used:***

The participants were tested individually for Self-Concept with the CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE (CSCS) by Dr. S.P. Ahluwalia (Haridwar). The English Version of the test was used.

The present scale has been prepared after the well-known Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (1969). The test contains 80 items in all with 'Yes' or 'No' responses. It includes 14 lie items to detect whether the children and adolescents have filled it accurately or not. It is a verbal paper-pencil test. The six sub-scales which are included in the Self-Concept Scale are considered to be important in the psychological world of childhood and adolescence. The names of these sub-scales have been given in Table 1.

***Table 1 The Six Sub-Scales of the CSCS***

Sr. No.	Name of the Sub-Scale
I.	Behavior
II.	Intellectual and School Status
III.	Physical Appearance and Attributes
IV.	Anxiety
V.	Popularity
VI.	Happiness and Satisfaction

The scale items are scored in a positive or negative direction to reflect the evaluation dimension. A high score on the scale is presumed to indicate a favorable self-concept, which is interchangeable with the term "Self-Esteem" or "Self-Regard".

### **Reliability:**

The Hindi version of this self-concept scale was administered to a random sample of 1060 students of Uttar Pradesh (Sharma, 1984). The mean age of the sample was 14.5 years. The test-retest and split-half reliability method was used as an index of reliability which has been reported in Table 2.

***Table 2 Description of Reliability Coefficient***

Sample	Age	Sex	No.	Index	Coefficient
Middle School	12 years	Male	330	Test-Retest	.83
High School	14 years	Female	380	Test-Retest	.88
Higher Secondary	15 years	Male	470	Split Half	.74
Higher Secondary	15 years	Female	590	Split Half	.79

The co-efficient of correlations reported in Table 2 are significant beyond .01 level of confidence. This indicates that this self-concept scale is quite reliable as the obtained reliability coefficients are adequately high.

### **Validity:**

The validity of the self-concept scale has been determined in three ways:

**Face validity-** The content validity of the self-concept scale was determined by "Translation and Back Translation method". The original version of Piers translated into Hindi by the author. It was found by the two experts (Dr. Ellen V. Piers and Dr. S. P. Ahluwalia), that all

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

the items faithfully represented the same ideas as reflected in the original scale. Evidently, the instrument has face and content validity in high order.

**Concurrent validity-** In order to ascertain concurrent validity of the self-concept scale, the cores from each sub-scale were inter-correlated. All the correlations are significant beyond 0.1 level.

**Factorial validity-** The structure of the original scale was investigated (Piers, 1969) on the sixth-grade level by means of a multiple factor analysis. Responses to the 80 items of the scale were placed in matrix and were intercorrelated. The factors accounted for 42% of the total common variance. Of these, six were large enough to be interpretable.

**Table 3 Matrix of inter-correlation between various elements of self-concept. (n=239) Dimensions of self-concept.**

	A	B	C	D	E	F
A	-	.504	.433	.539	.512	.540
B	.504	-	.621	.621	.517	.384
C	.433	.621	-	.412	.427	.453
D	.539	.512	.412	-	.397	.451
E	.512	.517	.427	.397	-	.400
F	.540	.384	.453	.451	.400	-

All the correlations are significant beyond .1 levels.

### **Procedure:**

- Time Requirement- Only 15 to 20 minutes are usually required to administer the scale, but as a rule being a power test, there are no limits of time or it's 6 sub-scales.
- Grade level- The scale has been successfully used for children and adolescents who can read and write, of school classes from Class 3 to Class 12.

### **Administration-**

- The testee should be seated comfortably in normal psychological conditions.
- The test administrator should not allow any material other than test booklets and pencils to the students.

The following instructions are to be given clearly:

“Here are a set of statements. Read the statement one by one and encircle your answer, either YES or NO. Remember, encircle the YES if the statement is generally like you, or encircle the statement NO if the statement is generally not like you. There are no right or wrong answers. There is no time limit but try to do it as soon as possible. Try to give genuine answers. Do not open the booklets, until you are told so. Do not mark the booklets in any manner. All writing work should be done on answer sheets.”

### **Scoring:**

To facilitate the scoring, a set of scoring stencils (on transparent paper) has also been provided. For scoring, the relevant area of self-concept stencils should be placed over the answer sheet of the test in a manner that the two asterisks at the top and at the bottom should

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

coincide with the asterisks on the transparent paper. The scorer is required to mark the response category, marked or encircled by the tenses and to award him one score if the tick or circle of the transparent paper stencil. The sum of the scores for each sub-scale of the self-concept scale can be obtained by adding the scores. The total self-concept score can be obtained by adding scores of all the six areas, which can be used as a total self-concept score.

**Table 4 Detailed Scoring Procedure**

SN	Area of Self-concept	Response	Item No.
1	Behaviour	Yes No	12* 4, 13, 14, 22, 25, 31, 32, 34, 56, 59*, 64, 67, 76, 78, 80
2	Intellectual and school status	Yes No	5, 21, 27*, 30, 33*+, 42, 49, 57*, 70 7*, 9, 11*, 12, 16, 17, 26, 53, 66
3	Physical appearance and attributes	Yes No	15, 27, 41, 49, 54, 55*, 57, 60, 63, 72 8*, 29
4	Anxiety	Yes No	44, 55 6, 7, 8, 10, 20, 28, 37, 40*, 74, 79
5	Popularity	Yes No	33, 49, 51, 57, 69 1, 3, 11, 40, 46, 58, 77
6	Happiness and satisfaction	Yes No	2, 8, 36, 39, 52 38, 50, 59
7.	Lie Score Items		18, 19, 23, 24, 35, 43, 45, 47, 48, 61, 62, 62, 65, 68, 71, 72, 75

\* Some of the items measure more than one area. As such their score is to be added to respective sub-scales in which they have appeared.

The maximum score for the scale can be 78, whereas the minimum score can be zero.

**Analysis of Data:** The data obtained was scored manually. The total raw scores of the two groups have been subjected to suitable statistical techniques like **MEAN, SD & t-test**. The obtained data was arranged in a tabular form for better and efficient understanding. Further, 't' score was referred to check for the significant difference between the means of the two groups, i.e. single and mixed gender high school girls. Comparative analysis was done by comparing the mean values of the two groups.

### RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

**Table 5. shows the Mean, SD and 't' values of the two different groups.**

Measures	Groups	N	Mean	SD	't' score
Self-Concept	Single Gender School Girls	50	M1: <b>65.32</b>	SD1: <b>5.85</b>	<b>5.92</b> *p
	Mixed Gender School Girls	50	M2: <b>55.18</b>	SD2: <b>10.63</b>	

(\*p=0.01, \*\*p=0.05)

Table no. 5 shows that the two groups under the study i.e. girls studying in single gender high school and girls studying in mixed gender high school differ significantly on total scores of self-concept. The significant mean difference is found to be **5.92** which is significant at 0.01 level (\*p=0.01). Girls studying in single gender schools have scored

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

higher mean ( $M_1=65.32$ ,  $SD_1=5.85$ ) than girls studying in mixed gender schools ( $M_2=55.18$ ,  $SD_2=10.63$ ). Therefore, as per the results of this study, it can be said that the hypotheses are proved. It may be said that girls studying in single gender schools have greater self-concept as compared to girls studying in mixed gender schools.

### DISCUSSION

The term self-concept is a general term used to refer to how someone thinks about, evaluates or perceives themselves. To be aware of oneself is to have a concept of oneself. The self-concept is an important term for both social and humanistic psychology. Self-concept and academic achievement are also a positive feedback loop, as actions beget similar actions and identity to match. In a longitudinal study, Marsh (1990) found that students with more positive academic self-concept achieved greater academic success the following year.

Adolescence is where the development of one's self-concept really explodes. This is the stage in which individuals (about age 12-18) play with their sense of self, including a time when they experiment with their identity, compare themselves with others, and develop the basis of a self-concept that may stay with them the rest of their life.

Because high school is such a crucial time for all aspects of life, the high school student is put under a lot of pressure and stress to perform at a certain level. These stressors and influences can have serious effects on students' self-esteem. Females, especially, are impacted by how their peers perceive them. This brings the present study to the division of genders at school. Single sex schools have become popular institutions. Researchers continually argue that single-sex schools are extremely beneficial for girls in terms of academics, self-concept and other contributing factors.

The present study is interested in these two factors described above, self-concept and type of school, and how the two correlated with one another. The present study is focused on girls' self-concept rates at single gender and co-educational schools by measuring various domains of self-concept.

The problems of the study are as follows:

- Do high school girls studying in single gender and mixed gender schools differ from each other in Self-Concept?
- Does self-concept of high school girls studying in single gender and mixed gender schools differ from each other significantly?
- Does type of school have any effect on the self-concept of high school girls?

The objectives of the study are as follows:

- To examine and evaluate the self-concept of high school girls studying in mixed gender and single gender schools.
- To study the effect of type of school on the self-concept of high school girls. The hypotheses of the study are as follows:
- Girls studying in mixed gender schools and single gender schools differ significantly on Self-Concept.
- Girls studying in single gender schools will have higher Self-Concept as compared to the girls studying in mixed gender schools.
- Type of school will have an effect on the Self-Concept of high school girls.

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

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The participants were tested individually for Self-Concept with the CHILDREN'S SELF CONCEPT SCALE (CSCS) by Dr. S.P. Ahluwalia (Haridwar). The English Version of the test was used. The present scale has been prepared after the well-known Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale (1969). The test contains 80 items in all with 'Yes' or 'No' responses. It includes 14 lie items to detect whether the children and adolescents have filled it accurately or not. It is a verbal paper-pencil test. The six sub-scales which are included in the Self-Concept Scale are considered to be important in the psychological world of childhood and adolescence. The sub-scales are Behaviour, Intellectual and School status, Physical Appearance, Anxiety, Popularity, Happiness and Satisfaction.

The test- retest and split-half reliability method was used as an index of Reliability. The coefficient of correlations reported in Table 2. are significant beyond .01 level of confidence. This indicates that this self-concept scale is quite reliable as the obtained reliability coefficients are adequately high.

The validity of the self-concept scale has been determined in three ways, face validity, concurrent validity and factorial validity. As shown in Table 3. all the correlations are significant beyond .1 levels.

The procedure of the test was quite simple and the test was easy to administer. It took around 20-30 minutes to complete the test. The students were given the booklets and answer sheets. They were asked to read the statements given in the booklet and if they agreed to the statement, they had to encircle on "YES" in the answer sheet and if they did not agree, they had to encircle on "NO" on the answer sheet.

The scoring procedure for the self-concept scale was simple. The items are scored in the direction of high (adequate) self-concept according to the scoring stencil. One score is to be awarded to each statement either "Yes" or "No" as described in the scoring key in the Manual.

The raw scores obtained were converted statistically by using "t-test" and further the results were analyzed by referring to the calculated "t-value" by using the "t-table".

The analysis of results of the present study reveals that the two groups under the study i.e. girls studying in single gender high school and girls studying in mixed gender high school differ significantly on total scores of self-concept. There is visible significant difference found in the self-concept of both the groups. The t-score i.e. **5.92** which is significant at 0.01 level (\*p=0.01). Girls studying in single gender schools have scored higher mean (M1=65.32, SD1=5.85) than girls studying in mixed gender schools (M2=55.18, SD2=10.63). Therefore, as per the results of this study, it can be said that the hypotheses are proved. It may be said that girls studying in single gender schools have greater self-concept as compared to girls studying in mixed gender schools.

On the basis of the results obtained in the present study, it can be said that single gender schooling is more beneficial for the growth of self-concept in girls as compared to mixed

## **Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions**

gender schooling in n-number of ways. As adolescence plays a very important role in the overall development of self, studying with the same gender during this period minimizes the noticing of the opposite gender which is very commonly found in this age due to different hormonal changes and puberty. Also, gender stereotypes are minimal in such type of schooling as all the peers are of the same gender and do the same work and excel in all the subjects equally regardless of gender.

Single-sex schools allow girls to succeed in areas where they may not have if their male peers were present. It is a common educational belief that boys have a tendency to steal their teachers' attention, making it more difficult for girls to have direct contact with their teachers. Mixed gender schooling on the other hand might differentiate between the subjects and may link some subjects to one gender or the other. For example, boys are good at mathematics and all mechanical subjects whereas girls are good in the artistic field. Single-sex environments are believed to be more favorable for high school girls because it allows girls the opportunity to succeed in areas such as math and science, two fields which are stereotypically thought of as being male dominated (Lee & Bryk, 1986).

The bifurcation of excellence is negated in single gender schooling making all the girls capable of attaining success in various fields. Gender roles are also not present in single gender schooling. Other supporters of single-sex schooling hold what we term the "girl power" view, citing the problem of domineering boys in coeducational classrooms as a reason for separating boys and girls. In coeducational classrooms, boys tend to seek out and receive the majority of teachers' attention, particularly in math and science (Lee, Marks, & Bryk, 1994).

Furthermore, educators worry that boys' sexist attitudes and behaviours decrease girls' interest in traditionally masculine STEM fields (Lee et al., 1994; Sacker & Sadker, 1994; Sadker, Sadker, & Zittleman, 2009). The reasoning goes that, in single-sex classrooms, girls can develop self-confidence in mathematics and science; that is, single-sex classrooms are empowering to girls (hence our term "girl power").

Single-sex environments do affect the students differently than co-educational schools; however, the effects are more dramatic when it comes to girls (Lee & Bryk, 1986). Some pre-existing research which examined the effects of attending co-educational and single-sex schools determined that girls benefited a great deal more from the single-sex environment than boys did (Marsh, 1989).

Self-concept is an extremely important aspect that leads to a stronger foundation of personality. This area should not be neglected and should be given utmost priority.

Attitudes once formed towards schools are difficult to change. If a child thinks of himself as a "poor reader" he cannot be motivated to improve his reading until he can be persuaded to change his self-concept. A person's attitudes towards education affect the kind of adjustment he makes to school. His adjustment is expressed in behaviour patterns which both he and others use in evaluating him. The relationship that exists between teacher and student and the way the student perceives that relationship have a direct effect on the student's self-concept. If he sees himself as a "good" person, as he believes his teacher sees him that will have an ego-inflating effect on his self-concept.

## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

Also, the girls who have studied in single gender schools are more career-oriented and aspire for education. Lee and Marks (1990) investigated the "sustained effects" of single-sex schools on attitudes, behaviours, and values. They discovered that women who had attended single-sex schools had higher educational aspirations and were more likely than their co-educational counterparts to attend selective four-year colleges.

As per the general principle in education, a student needs good self-concept in order to be successful in academic life. To achieve this success, type of school can impact the student's overall self-concept. The present study concludes that girls studying in single gender schools have greater self-concept as compared to girls studying in mixed gender schools.

### CONCLUSION

Self-concept is one of the most widely discussed but misunderstood construct in education. As per the general principle in education, a student needs good self-concept in order to be successful in academic life. To achieve this success, type of school can impact the student's overall self-concept. The present study concludes that girls studying in single gender schools have greater self-concept as compared to girls studying in mixed gender schools.

### Recommendations

- Nowadays, there are many of new concept schools emerging in India and all around the world. Researchers and psychologists can conduct tests to assess the self-concept of students, especially adolescents which can help them to decide in which type of school will give maximum benefit to them.
- Single-gender schooling should be promoted as the results of the present and previous studies show that students, especially girls have proved highly beneficial for them.
- Self-concept is an extremely important aspect of the overall development of personality, so it should be given priority.
- Every school must have a counsellor trained for counselling services so that self-concept can be assessed timely for better understanding of the barriers that come in between the development of the students.

### Limitations

- The sample was restricted to Nagpur city only.
- Sample size was small; therefore, this study cannot be generalized but can act as a springboard for further researches.
- The participant's family history was not studied.
- Only girls were chosen for this study, boys were excluded.

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## Impact of School Type on the Self-Concept of Female Adolescents: A Study of Single and Mixed Gender Institutions

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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