

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

Mufeeda Farsana A.^{1*}, Reshmi V.R.², Shehinai P.S Dheen³, Thushara Thulasi
B.⁴, Dhanalakshmi R.⁵, Dr Kala Rani K. S.⁶, Dr Anil Jose P.S.⁷

ABSTRACT

Adolescence represents a transitional stage of life marked by considerable physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. Self-esteem denotes an individual's positive or negative attitude toward self (Rosenberg, 1965). Locus of control refers to the perceived capacity to influence life outcomes despite external forces (Rotter, 1966). This study tries to examine the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents, and analyses differences by gender, institutional affiliation, and educational stream. The sample comprised of 360 first-year college students in the Trivandrum district of Kerala. Self-Esteem Inventory by Thomas and Sananda Raj (1985) and the Locus of Control Scale by Sony and Sananda Raj (1998) were used to collect the data. To analyze the data, Pearson's correlation, independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were conducted using SPSS. Results revealed a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and internal locus of control among adolescents. No gender based differences were found in either self-esteem or locus of control. Students from government colleges displayed a more internal locus of control than those in aided colleges. No significant differences were observed across educational streams (Arts, Language, Science) in self-esteem or locus of control. These findings may assist educators in developing strategies to enhance self-esteem by fostering shifts toward a more internal locus of control.

Keywords: *Self- Esteem, Locus of Control, Adolescence*

Self-esteem and locus of control are two important psychological concepts significantly influencing adolescent development and mental health. Self-esteem refers to an individual's positive or negative attitude toward oneself (Rosenberg, 1965). It plays a significant role in their identity formation and confidence during this transitional stage. Students with high self-esteem tend to exhibit self-respect, greater ambition, and resilience in the face of difficulties. They are physically and psychologically well, have healthier

¹Research Scholar, Department of Psychology Fatima Mata National College, Kollam, Kerala, India.

²Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Chirst Nagar College, Thiruvananthapuram

³Office Assistant, L & T Finance

⁴Consultant Psychologist, Peace Valley, Kothamangalam

⁵Assistant, Super Tex

⁶Associate Professor, Department of Psychology University College, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

⁷Associate Professor, Department of Psychology Fatima Mata National College, Kollam, Kerala, India.

*Corresponding Author

Received: September 20, 2025; Revision Received: October 08, 2025; Accepted: October 11, 2025

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

interpersonal relationships, and an optimistic and constructive view regarding life. These characteristics support their ability to interpret experiences positively and guard against frustration (Gurhan et al., 2012). Whereas those with lower self-esteem are more prone to heightened anxiety, are more vulnerable to depression, and have broader mental health issues (Liu et al., 2021).

Adolescence is a very critical period for changes in the development of self-esteem (Masselink et al., 2017). Studies revealed that self-esteem remains high during childhood and adulthood, but declines in adolescence (Pullmann et al., 2009, Baldwin & Hoffmann, 2002). As adolescents especially students are the asset of a society, their self-esteem is one of the major concern of researchers. Now a day, there are many training for enhancing self-esteem like TRP training. These training aim to enhance self-esteem by changing various factors affecting self-esteem such as self concepts, competent behavior and locus of control.

Locus of control refers to the perceived capacity to influence life outcomes regardless of external forces. It can be Internal or external. Those with an internal locus of control reflect a belief in personal agency, whereas an external locus indicates reliance on external determinants, such as fate, randomness, or influential others, for life events (Rotter, 1966).

Studies have highlighted the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control. For example, a study by Schunk (2003) revealed that adolescents with higher self-esteem tended to have an internal locus of control, which eased their engagement in goal-setting and perseverance in demanding situations. Also, Zhang et al. (2014) found that adolescents with an external locus of control reported lower self-esteem levels, emphasizing the significance of cultivating a sense of control over one's actions to enhance self-worth.

Likewise, Williams and Suls (1991) reported that developing an internal locus of control could significantly impact adolescents' self-esteem positively by encouraging proactive behavior and resilience in the face of challenges. This research underlines the necessity for educational and psychological interventions aimed at fostering both self-esteem and internal locus of control in adolescents. Programs designed to engage youth in decision-making processes and promote self-reflection can strengthen their belief in their capabilities, thereby enhancing their self-esteem and overall well-being (Rosenberg, 1965).

METHODOLOGY

Aim

This study aims to assess the relationship between Self -esteem and Locus of control among adolescents.

Objectives

- To find out the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents.
- To compare the self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents with respect to gender.
- To compare the self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents with respect to type of institution (Govt, Aided).
- To compare the self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents with respect to stream of education (Arts, science and Language).

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

Hypotheses

- H₁ There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents.
- H₂ There is a significant difference in self-esteem among adolescents with regard to gender
- H₃ There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents with regard to gender
- H₄ There is a significant difference in self esteem among adolescents based on type of institution
- H₅ There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents based on type of institution
- H₆ There is a significant difference in Self esteem among adolescents by stream of education
- H₇ There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents by stream of education

Operational definitions

- Self-esteem: It is a positive or negative attitude toward him/herself (Rosenberg, 1965)
- Locus of control: It is an extent to which people think they could control situations influencing them (Rotter, 1996).
- Adolescents: College-going students under the age of 19.

Design

A cross-sectional quantitative study examined the correlation between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents which emphasizes on the statistical analysis of data collected through standardized questionnaires.

Variables

- Independent variables: Age, Gender
- Dependent variables: self - esteem and locus of control

Participants

Participants were 360 first-year college students enrolled in various colleges across the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala. The distribution of participants is as follow:

Table 1 Distribution of sample based on Type of institution and Gender

Govt. College students		Aided college students		Total
Male	Female	Male	Female	
92	88	92	88	360

Table 2 Distribution of sample based on Type of institution and Gender and Stream of education

Govt. Colleges				Aided Colleges				Total				
Arts		Science		Language		Language						
M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F					
31	30	30	30	31	28	30	30	31	28	31	30	360

Inclusion criteria

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

- First and second year regular college going students under age 19.
- Students from Arts, Science and Language streams
- Students from Govt and Aided Institution

Exclusion criteria

- College going students aged above 19
- Students from Professional and unaided colleges

Sample

Data were collected using a stratified sampling method from college students aged under 19 from aided and government colleges across Arts, Science, and Humanities streams.

Instruments used for the study

- **Self-esteem Inventory:** The self-esteem inventory developed by Thomas and Sananda Raj (1985) of Kerala University used to assess the self-esteem of the students. This consists of 20 statements (in English and Malayalam) with an equal number of positive and negative items arranged randomly. Responses are recorded on a five-point scale (A to E). The inventory exhibits good psychometric qualities: split-half reliability (corrected using the Spearman-Brown formula) is 0.95, and test-retest reliability is 0.90 ($p < 0.01$). It also possesses content validity significantly with teacher rated self-esteem ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$), indicating it is a standardized measure for assessing self-esteem in students.
- **Locus of control scale:** The locus of control scale was developed by Sony and Sananda Raj (1998) of Kerala University, adapted from Rotter's (1954) concept used to assess the locus of control of students. This is a self-report inventory with evaluative and descriptive statements with an equal number of positive and negative items arranged randomly. Responses are given on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The scale demonstrates good reliability, with a split-half coefficient of 0.78 and test-retest reliability of 0.64, both significant at the 0.01 level. Concurrent validity was also established through a correlation of 0.76 with an external criterion, indicating that the scale validly and reliably assesses students' locus of control. A high score in this scale indicates an internal locus of control, and a low score indicates an external locus of control.
- **Demographic data sheet:** A demographic data sheet was used to collect basic personal information such as gender, stream of education (Arts, Science, or Language), and type of institution attended (Aided, Unaided, or Government). This data was used to categorize participants for comparative analysis.

Procedure of the Study

In this study, permission was obtained from the college principals, and the researcher collected data from participants directly. Respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain confidential. Consent forms were provided, and participants were encouraged to answer all questions honestly. Ethical considerations were fully observed. After data collection, statistical analyses were conducted, results interpreted, and conclusions drawn based on whether the hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

Statistical Techniques

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) to examine the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control, Independent-samples t -test to assess gender differences, and differences based on the type of institution, and One-way ANOVA to determine differences across streams of education (Arts, Science, and Humanities) were used for analysis using SPSS.

RESULTS

The analysis of the results of the study which was done with the aid of a Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS). This involves Pearson's Correlation to understand the relationship between the variables, independent sample t -test and One-way ANOVA to know the difference in variables.

- H1: There is a significant relationship between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents.

Table 3 Correlation between Self-esteem and Locus of control among adolescents

Variables	1	2
Self-esteem	1	-
Locus of Control	.375**	1

Note: ** = $P < .01$

It can be seen from the above table, there is significant positive relationship between self-esteem and locus of control ($r = .375$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, the first hypothesis was accepted.

- H2: There is a significant difference in self-esteem among adolescents with regard to gender.

Table 4 Gender difference in Self-esteem among adolescents

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value
Self-esteem	Male	182	72.57	12.618	.909
	Female	178	71.39	11.961	

($p > 0.1$)

The table 4 indicates that there is no significant gender difference in self-esteem between males and females ($t = .909$, $p > 0.1$). Accordingly, the hypothesis 2 was rejected.

- H3: There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents with regard to gender

Table 5 Gender difference in Locus of control among adolescents

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value
Locus of control	Male	182	68.07	11.030	.820
	Female	178	67.17	9.704	

($p > 0.1$)

The table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in locus of control among adolescents based on gender females ($t = .820$, $p > 0.1$). So, empirical results do not support the third the hypothesis.

- H4: There is a significant difference in self esteem among adolescents based on type of institution

Table 6 Difference in self-esteem among adolescents based on Type of institution (TI)

Variable	TI	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value
Self-esteem	Aided	181	71.42	12.268	-.874
	Govt	179	72.55	12.329	

($p > 0.1$)

The results shows no significant difference in self esteem with regard to type of institution ($t = -.874$, $p > 0.1$). No evidence was uphold to support the hypothesis 4. Therefore, it was rejected.

- H5: There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents based on type of institution

Table 7 Difference in locus of control among adolescents based on Type of institution (TI)

Variable	TI	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value
Locus of control	Aided	181	66.20	9.470	-2.635
	Govt	179	69.07	11.087	

($p > 0.1$)

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

The result revealed that there is a significant difference in locus of control between aided and unaided college students ($t=-2.635$, $p>0.1$). Therefore, the hypothesis 6 was accepted.

- H6: There is a significant difference in Self esteem among adolescents by stream of education.

Table 8 Difference in self-esteem among adolescents based on Stream of education.

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F value	Sig.value
Between Groups	484.517	2	242.259		
Within Groups	533779.383	357	150.634	1.608	.202
Total	56263.900	359			

The ANOVA results indicated that there is no significant difference in self-esteem across different streams of education (Arts, Science and Language). The value of f statistic is with p value of 0.202, which is higher than the significance threshold of 0.05. So, the hypothesis 6 is rejected.

- H7: There is a significant difference in Locus of control among adolescents by stream of education

Table 9 Difference in Locus of control among adolescents based on Stream of education.

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F value	Sig.value
Between Groups	58.113	2	242.259		
Within Groups	38704.009	357	150.634	.268	.765
Total	38762.122	359			

Table 9 demonstrates the ANOVA results on the difference in locus of control based on the stream of education (Arts, Science, and Language). There is no significant difference in locus of control across different streams (F value =.268).

DISCUSSION

Self-esteem and locus of control is crucial for adolescents proper psychological functioning. Correlation analysis revealed that an increase in self-esteem is associated with a corresponding increase in internal locus of control. This may be because individual with higher self-esteem tend to perceive themselves as competent, worthy and capable. This

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

positive self-view enhances their confidence in making decisions and reinforces the belief that their actions directly influence life outcomes, reflecting an internal locus of control. Also, particularly during this crucial transition time, higher self-esteem increases confidence and autonomy, which in turn promote an internal locus of control. This finding aligns with prior research by (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2002), who highlighted that self-esteem is a central component of core self-evaluations that predict internal control orientations. Therefore, the hypothesis H1 was supported.

The t-test analysis examined gender-based differences in self-esteem and internal locus of control. The findings indicated that male and female adolescents did not differ significantly in their level of self-esteem, resulting to the non-acceptance of hypothesis H2. These may be due to factors such as the similarity in socialization practices, equal access to educational opportunities and changing cultural perceptions of gender roles, which in turn reduce the disparities in self-esteem between male and female adolescents. Study by Twenge and Campbell (2001) reported that gender differences in self-esteem have progressively declined due to change in pattern in gender roles. The findings also shows that both male and female adolescents perceive similar levels of control over their lives and outcomes. One possible explanation is that adolescents today are more exposed to a wider range of socialization opportunities within college and other environments. In addition, increased access to extracurricular opportunities may reduce gender-based differences in psychological constructs such as locus of control. Mohanty (2021) has provided similar evidence that there is no significant gender difference in locus of control. Thus, hypothesis H3 was rejected.

The findings revealed no significant difference in self-esteem between adolescents from aided and government colleges. This indicates that type of institution does not influence individual's perception of self-worth. This may be due to that both colleges provide similar social, cultural, peer and academic environment that enhance the positive feeling toward self. Previous research by Maheshwari and Joshi (2018) supports this view that both private college boys and government college boys experience similar levels of self-esteem, thereby rejecting hypothesis (H4). The t-value is of -2.635 indicates a statistically significant difference in locus of control between government and private college students. This difference may be due to variations in institutional environment or exposure to opportunities that influence students' perceptions of control. The hypothesis H5 is accepted.

The ANOVA results indicates that the academic stream chosen by students does not influence their level of self-esteem and locus of control. Self-esteem and locus of control are more shaped by individual, family and social factors rather than by academic stream. Acceptance in society raise self-esteem, while rejection lowers it. Sociometer Theory by Leary (1999) emphasized that self esteem is rooted in our need for social connection and belonging. Since all stream provide relatively similar for academic engagement and peer interaction, adolescents perception of control over their lives may remain relatively consistent regardless of subject choices. Thus, hypothesis H6 and H7 are rejected.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and locus of control among adolescents, indicating that as self-esteem increases, individuals are more inclined toward an internal locus of control. A gender based comparison found no significant differences in either self-esteem or locus of control. Regarding the type of institution, the study revealed no significant difference in self-esteem across groups. However, Students attending government schools exhibited more internal locus of control compared to those in aided

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

colleges. Lastly, analysis based on various streams of education (Arts, Science, Language) showed no significant differences in either self-esteem or locus of control.

Implications

Self-esteem can be effectively enhanced by fostering an internal locus of control orientation in Adolescence. Implementing gender-neutral, Institution specific and Stream uniform strategies may help self-esteem development across different adolescent groups.

Limitations and Suggestions for further study

This study was conducted within a single district of Kerala using a small and localized sample. Also, the study includes a limited set of demographic variables. Future research should therefore include more samples for the generalizability of findings and variables such as socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds. Adoption of mixed method approaches instead of quantitative methods may help to understand more about self-esteem and locus of control, which may help to develop effective strategies to enhance self-esteem in adolescence.

REFERENCES

- Baldwin, S. A., & Hoffmann, J. P. (2002). The dynamics of self-esteem: A growth- curve analysis. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 31(2), 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1014065825598>
- Gurhan, N., Ozbas, A. A., & Kabatas, E. (2012). Childhood abuse and its effects in students of Ankara vocational high school child development. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 47, 1141- 1145. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.792>
- Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2002). Are measures of self- esteem, neuroticism, locus of control, and generalized self-efficacy indicators of a common core construct? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 83(3), 693–710. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.83.3.693>
- Leary, M. R. (1999). *Making sense of self-esteem*. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 8(1), 32–35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8721.00008>
- Liu, K., Zhang, Y., Qu, S., Yang, W., Guo, L., & Zhang, L. (2021). Prevalence and correlates of anxiety and depressive symptoms in patients with and without multi-drug-resistant pulmonary tuberculosis in China. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2021.674891>
- Maheshwari, A., & Joshi, H. L. (2018). A comparative study of self-esteem among private and government school boys. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 5(3), 162–166.
- Masselink, M., Van Roekel, E., & Oldehinkel, A. J. (2017). Self-esteem in early adolescence as predictor of depressive symptoms in late adolescence and early adulthood: The mediating role of motivational and social factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(5), 932- 946. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-017-0727-z>
- Mohanty, A. (2021). Gender differences in locus of control among adolescents. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 9(1), 1205–1212. <https://doi.org/10.25215/0901.128>
- Pullmann, H., Allik, J., & Realo, A. (2009). Global self-esteem across the life span: A cross-sectional comparison between representative and self-selected internet samples. *Experimental Aging Research*, 35(1), 20-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03610730802544708>
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the Adolescent Self-Image*. Princeton University Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt183pjhh>

Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents

Rotter, J. B. (1996). *Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement*. Psychological Monographs: General and Applied.

Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2001). Age and birth cohort differences in self-esteem: A cross-temporal meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 321–344. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0504_3

Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

How to cite this article: Farsana, M.A., Reshmi, V.R., Dheen, S.P.S., Thulasi, B.T., Dhanalakshmi, R., Rani, K.S.K. & Jose, P.S.A. (2025). Self esteem and Locus of Control among Adolescents. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 13(4), 012-021. DIP:18.01.002.20251304, DOI:10.25215/1304.002