

Research Paper

A Study on Locus of Control among Urban Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is one of the most critical periods of life. The present study examined the levels and patterns of three dimensions of Locus of Control i.e. Powerful Others control, Chance control and Individual control among urban adolescents and also the influence of age, education and socio-economic status on these dimensions. Using an ex post-facto research design, a sample of 60 adolescents aged between 15–24 years were selected through random sampling method. The data was collected by administering Locus of control scale developed by Sanjay Vohra through google forms. Findings revealed that most of the respondents were in the age group of 19–24 years, belonged to upper middle socio-economic category and pursuing graduation followed by post-graduation. The majority demonstrated average levels of Powerful Others control (82%) and Chance control (63%), indicating moderate dependence on authority figures and external factors such as luck, with girls reporting significantly higher chance beliefs. Individual control was also predominantly average (70%), with a small proportion exhibiting high internal control, reflecting balanced self-efficacy and growing autonomy during late adolescence. Correlation results showed education, age and socio-economic status to be positively significantly associated with internal locus of control dimension, suggesting that maturity, academic exposure and economic stability enhance both self-belief and awareness of external influences. Overall, the study highlights locus of control as a multidimensional construct shaped by demographic factors and developmental processes, emphasizing the need for educational and social environments that promote internal control, autonomy and empowered decision-making among adolescents.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Internal, External, Control, Adolescents, personality of adolescents*

Locus of Control (LOC) refers to an individual's personal belief that the events which occur in his or her life are either as a result of personal control and effort or outside forces such as fate and luck. A person is said to have internal LOC when he has the perception that events that happen in his life are under his control. A person is said to have external LOC when he has the perception that events that happen in his life are beyond his control such as chance and luck factor. The concept of locus of control (LOC) among youth

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has become increasingly relevant in understanding psychological development, academic achievement and mental health outcomes. Youth is a critical developmental phase where personality traits, coping mechanisms and attitudes towards challenges are shaped and their locus of control significantly influences decision-making, self-esteem, academic performance, career choices and mental well-being.

Individuals with an internal locus of control feel responsible for their success or failure and believe they can change situations through hard work, planning and determination. Adolescents with an internal locus of control believe that their own efforts, abilities and decisions determine what happens in their life. Developing an internal locus of control requires consistent reinforcement across different environments. The family is the primary social unit influencing a child's sense of control and responsibility. They should allow children to make age-appropriate decisions or managing their allowance, encourage problem-solving by letting them face the consequences of their decisions in a supportive environment, acknowledge and celebrate efforts, regardless of the outcome, reinforce the value of hard work, usage of constructive feedback to help children learn from mistakes instead of focusing on failure etc. External locus of control refers to the belief that events are controlled by external forces such as luck, fate, powerful others or circumstances beyond one's control. Individuals with an external locus of control often attribute outcomes to chance, destiny, other people's decisions, or environmental factors rather than their own efforts. Adolescents with an external locus of control believe that outside forces such as luck, fate, chance, teachers, parents, society determine what happens to them. Several biological, psychological and social factors shape an adolescent's locus of control such as Parenting Style, School Environment, Socio-economic background, Peer Influence, Life Experiences, Cultural Factors, Personality Traits etc. Research studies revealed that about 69% of the adolescents exhibited internal locus of control and 31% demonstrated external locus of control Friday *et al.* (2018).

Since Locus of control is an important psychological concept that explains how individuals perceive the causes of events in their lives whether they believe outcomes are controlled by their own efforts or by external forces. Studying locus of control is essential because it influences a person's motivation, decision-making, coping skills, academic performance and mental well-being. Understanding this concept helps educators, counsellors and psychologists to design better strategies to improve responsibility, resilience and self-confidence in adolescents and young adults. It also allows us to identify individuals who may struggle with stress, low motivation or dependency due to an overly external orientation.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an ex post-facto research design to examine the locus of control among adolescents from twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, Telangana state. A total of 60 urban adolescents in the age range of 15–24 years were selected using a random sampling technique to ensure equal representation and reduce selection bias. Standardized tools were administered to assess the levels of dimensions of locus of control such as Powerful Others control, Chance control and Individual control. The data was collected by using Locus of control scale by Sanjay Vohra (1992) through google forms. The collected data were systematically organized, coded and analyzed using SPSS.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data was collected from adolescents to study the dimensions of locus of control. The findings are as given below.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on their Age

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

Age (In years)	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
15-16 years	0	0	4	13	4	6
17-18 years	6	20	4	13	10	17
19-20 years	10	34	3	10	13	22
21-22 years	7	23	6	20	13	22
23-24 years	7	23	13	44	20	33
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100

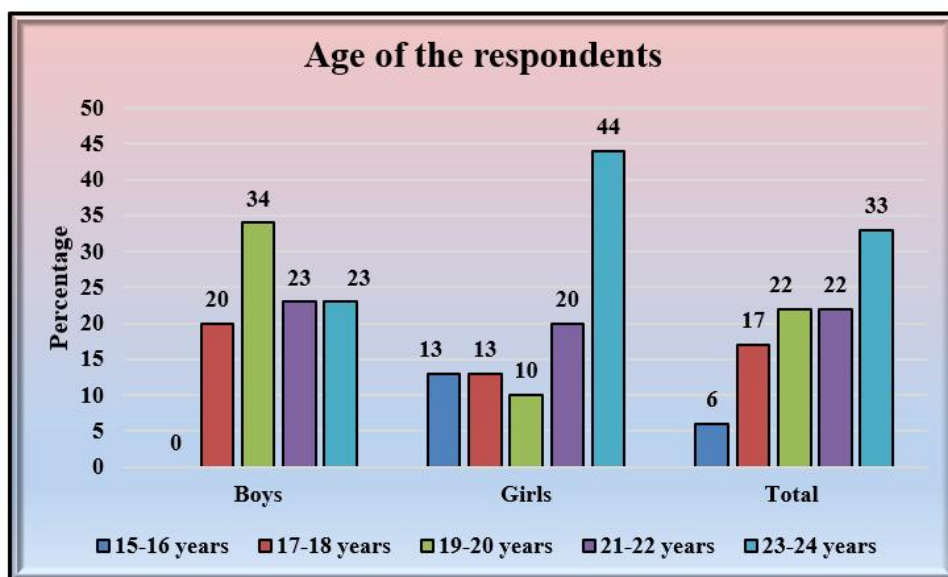


Fig.1 Age of the respondents

The data revealed that one third of the respondents fall between 23–24 years (33%) and 19–20 years and 21-22 years (22%). Few of them were in the age group of 17-18 years (17%) and 15-16 years (6%). It was also observed that girls in the age range of 19-22 years more when compared to boys and percentage of boys in the age range of 15-18 years and 23-24 years was more than girls. This indicates that majority of the sample were in late adolescence and research states that older participants may correspond with greater internality in control orientation (Rotter, 2024). Gender is a variable that influence maturity, self-concept and sense of control among the adolescents in which girls scored high scores when compared to boys.

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Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on their gender

Gender	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
	30	100	30	100	60	100
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100

It was imperative to notice from the above Table 2. that, an equal per cent of boys (50%) and girls (50%) were drawn for the study.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents based on their Education

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

Education	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Intermediate	4	13	0	0	4	6
Graduation	17	57	15	50	32	54
Post-graduation	9	30	15	50	24	40
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100

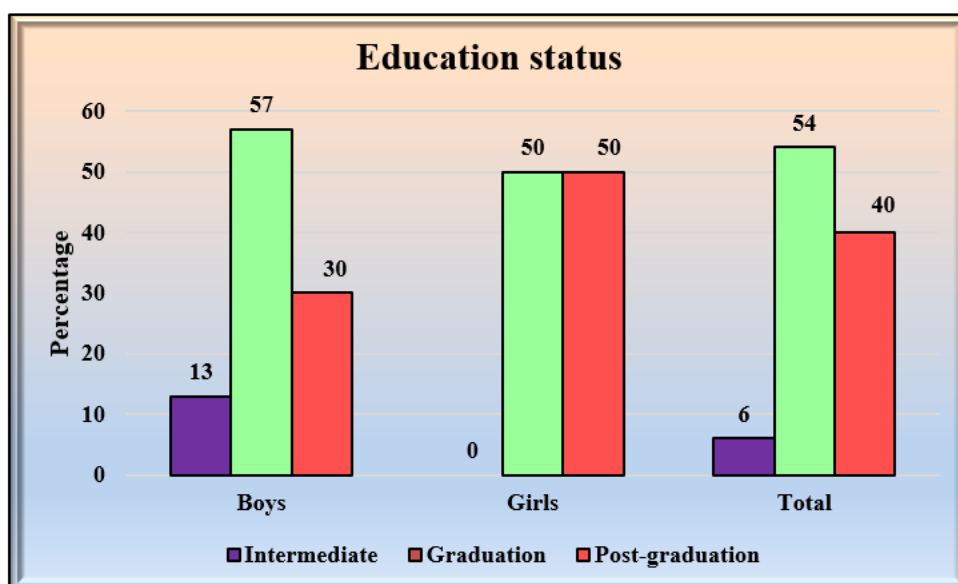


Fig.2 Education of the respondents

The above table depicted that most of the adolescent boys and girls participated in the present study were graduates (54%) and post graduates (40%) and only few (6%) were completed their intermediate. More number of girls (50%) were postgraduates compared to boys (30%), reflecting a higher academic achievement among females. This educational exposure may enhance their perceived control and confidence in influencing life outcomes. Studies by Friedman & Schustack (2024) emphasized that education nurtures cognitive complexity, analytical thinking and problem-solving core factors underlying an internal locus of control.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents based on their Socioeconomic status

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

Socio-economic status	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Upper class	4	13	2	7	6	10
Upper middle class	22	74	23	77	45	75
Middle class	3	10	4	13	7	12
Lower middle class	1	3	1	3	2	3
Lower class	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	100	30	100	60	100

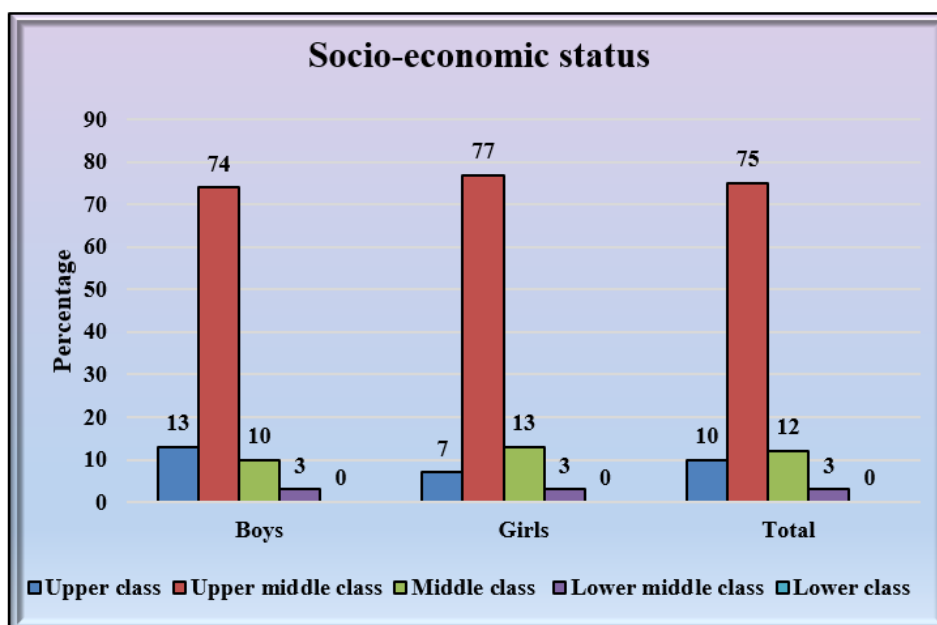


Fig.3 Socio-economic status of the respondents

Most of the participants belonged to the upper middle class (75%) and few of them belonged to middle class (12%) followed by upper class (10%) and a meagre percent were from lower middle class and none of them were fall under lower class. Both boys and girls predominantly fall into the upper middle category. This socio-economic stability could be a major contributor to internal control beliefs due to access to resources, support systems and life opportunities. SES provides security and empowerment. Recent cross-national reviews (Green *et al.*, 2025; Liao & Chen, 2024) demonstrated that individuals from higher SES groups showed stronger internal locus of control due to increased exposure to autonomy, decision-making and resource security. In line with the above Zhang *et al.* (2023) highlighted that socioeconomic privilege strengthens perceived competence and reduces fatalistic attributions. Thus, the high internal control seen in this sample may partly stem from the socio-economic advantage reflected in the data.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents based on the levels of Powerful others dimension of locus of control

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

S. No.	Powerful others levels	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	High	1	3	1	3	2	3
2.	Average	24	80	25	84	49	82
3.	Low	5	17	4	13	9	15
Total		30	100	30	100	60	100

A large majority (82%) of respondents both boys and girls scored average level of Powerful Others control dimension of Locus of control, while only few (15%) had low levels and a meagre percent (3%) reported high levels. This indicates that participants moderately acknowledge the influence of authority figures such as parents, teachers or leaders but do not perceive them as fully controlling their outcomes. A small segment (15%) with low scores indicates a growing sense of independence from external authorities. According to Nowicki *et al.* (2023), adolescents and young adults in modern educational environments are increasingly exposed to participatory and autonomy-supportive systems, reducing dependency on “powerful others.” Similarly, Lee & Martinez (2025) reported that contemporary youth balance respect for authority with self-assertion, leading to moderate “powerful others” scores. This aligns with the present findings showing average external orientation but emerging internalization. It was also noticed that both boys and girls had similar levels of locus of control in the dimension of powerful others.

Table 6. Distribution of respondents based on the levels of Chance Control dimension of locus of control

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

S. No.	Chance control levels	Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	High	3	10	13	43	16	27
2.	Average	23	77	15	50	38	63
3.	Low	4	13	2	7	6	10
Total		30	100	30	100	60	100

Majority of participants (63%) fall under the average range of chance control dimension of locus of control followed by high levels (27%) and only few had low levels of chances control (10%), suggesting that adolescents moderately attribute their achievements and outcomes more to luck or fate. Sweeny *et al.* (2024) found that belief in moderate chance control can coexist with optimism, serving as a coping mechanism in uncertain contexts and also reflect adaptive rather than purely fatalistic thinking. It was also found that girls scored high levels of chance control than boys. This might be due to the systematic gender inequalities, societal conditioning, differences in cultural expectations and socialization practices such as be accommodating and reliant on others and external validation that limit personal autonomy and control over their life outcomes. In line with the above recent gender-focused analysis by Taylor & Reitz (2024) and Kumar & Verma (2025) revealed that

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sociocultural conditioning often leads women to perceive external forces like destiny or luck as more influential due to systemic inequalities or protective socialization.

Table 7. Distribution of respondents based on the levels of Individual Control dimension of locus of control

S. No.	Individual control levels	(n ₁ = 30, n ₂ =30, n=60)					
		Boys (n1)		Girls (n2)		Total (n)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	High	6	20	7	23	13	22
2.	Average	20	67	22	74	42	70
3.	Low	4	13	1	3	5	8
Total		30	100	30	100	60	100

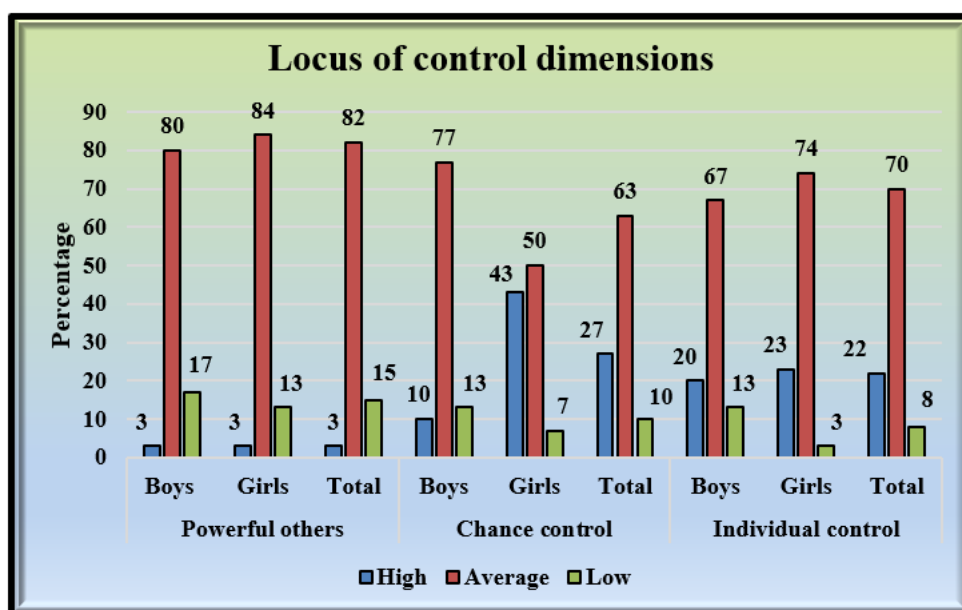


Fig. 4 Dimensions Locus of control of the respondents

The majority of respondents (70%) demonstrated average levels of individual control dimension of locus of control and nearly one forth (22%) scored high levels of individual control and only a meagre percent (8%) scored low levels. It was also found that girls slightly outnumber boys in the high-control category (23% vs. 20%), indicating marginally greater personal agency. This pattern reflects a balanced perception of self-efficacy and awareness of situational constraints. Studies by Bandura *et al.* (2023) and Sparks & Allen (2024) reaffirm that self-efficacy and internal control are strongly related to motivation, emotional regulation and achievement orientation. McAdams & Kim (2025) emphasized that youth today demonstrated a realistic form of internal control acknowledging limits but maintaining self-belief. The data thus illustrate moderate but healthy self-regulatory attitudes among majority of the participants.

Table 8. Gender Differences in Locus of Control among adolescents

(n₁= 30, n₂=30, n=60)

Dimension	GENDER	MEAN	S. D	t-value	p-value
Total P	Boys	22.76	4.53	-10.885	.280
	Girls	34.50	3.78		
Total C	Boys	23.16	3.79	-6.041*	.006
	Girls	31.26	6.28		
Total I	Boys	31.96	4.55	-5.595	.173
	Girls	23.36	5.63		

From the above table, it is important to note that there is a significant gender difference in the locus of control chance control dimension of Locus of control at 5% level and girls scored significantly higher score in chance control than their counter parts. Similarly, girls scored higher in the dimension of Powerful others than boys but not at significant level similarly boys scored high in Individual control dimension when compare to girls but not at significant level. This could be due to the reason that girls are often socialized to be more compliant, cooperative and dependent on authority figures (teachers, parents). This can make them feel that outcomes depend on others’ approval or support, not purely on their own actions. In many cultural settings, girls are encouraged to be cautious, modest and less assertive, which can lead to interpreting events as influenced by luck, fate, or external forces. Girls tend to be more sensitive to relationships and social evaluation too. However, boys scored higher (31.96) than girls (23.36) in individual control dimension the reason could be boys are often socialized to be independent, assertive and self-reliant, which strengthens their internal locus of control—the belief that “I can control my own outcomes.” Boys typically get more autonomy, outdoor activities and freedom to take risks. These experiences build confidence that they can influence their success through effort. Research shows that adolescent boys often display higher self-efficacy in academic, social and physical domains, contributing to stronger Individual Control scores than girls.

Table 9. Relationship between selected independent variables and locus of control

	Total P	Total C	Total I
Education	-.053 NS	-.103 NS	.513**
Age	-.262*	-.131 NS	.628**
Socio-economic status	-.106 NS	-.053 NS	.650**

*Note: **p=0.01 level of significance, *p=0.05 level of significance*

The table shows how three dimensions of locus of control such as Powerful Others Control, Chance Control and Individual Control relate to demographic factors (Education, Age and Socioeconomic Status) among adolescents.

Education had a substantial positive significant association (.513**) with Internal Control at the 1% level of significance, but non-significant negative correlations with Chance Control (-.103) and Powerful Others Control (-.053). This suggests that adolescent’s confidence in personal agency is strengthened by greater education levels while their dependence on other influences is diminished. Han and Kim (2025) also confirmed that higher education correlates with belief in personal agency and education act as a socialising and empowering force that fosters internal control orientation.

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Age exhibited a substantial negative association with Powerful Others Control (-.262*) at the 5% level of significance, a non-significant negative correlation with Chance Control (-.131), and a high positive correlation with Internal Control (.628**) at the 1% level of significance. This demonstrates that older adolescents grow less dependent on authoritative persons while acquiring greater internal control views, reflecting the natural developmental transition toward autonomy. In line with the current finding Cohen *et al.* (2024) also revealed that late adolescents demonstrated improved executive functioning and reflective judgement compared to their lower age counter parts. Along with the above, Nowicki & Duke (2023) revealed that locus of control becomes increasingly internalized with age due to neurological and cognitive maturation.

Socioeconomic status had the most significant positive correlation (.650**) with Internal Control at the 1% level of significance, but non-significant negative correlations with Chance Control (-.053) and Powerful Others Control (-.106). This implies that adolescents from higher socioeconomic backgrounds have much stronger internal control views, perhaps due to greater access to resources and opportunities.

Recent empirical review by Green *et al.* (2025) revealed that age contributes to internalization through life experience and cognitive maturity, education enhances analytical thinking and autonomy, Socio-economic status provides security and empowerment. Along with the above, Ferguson *et al.* (2024) emphasized that these factors interact synergistic, forming a “control capital” that predicts resilience, motivation and psychological well-being.

CONCLUSION

The status of locus of control among youth reflects complex interactions between individual, family, educational and societal factors. While trends toward external LOC raise concerns, targeted interventions and support systems can promote healthy development of internal LOC while maintaining realistic understanding of external influences. Continued research and practical applications are essential for supporting optimal psychological development in young people. By implementing internal LOC measures, youth can develop a stronger internal locus of control, enabling them to take charge of their lives, face challenges with confidence, and build a foundation for lifelong success. By analysing the internal and external locus of control among youth, educators, parents, and policymakers can develop targeted interventions to promote resilience, accountability, and proactive behaviors.

Overall, the study demonstrates that locus of control is a multifactorial construct shaped by age, education, and socio-economic context and moderated by gendered socialization. The trend toward higher internality among females represents a positive societal transformation toward equality in self-perception and empowerment. These findings echo the 2024–2025 theoretical shift in personality and social psychology that frames locus of control not as a fixed trait but as a dynamic, developmentally sensitive belief system influenced by life circumstances and societal evolution (McAdams & Kim, 2025).

Locus of control among youth can be improved at multiple levels by creating environments that build responsibility, confidence, and self-direction. At the institute level, workshops on life skills, counselling support, student-led activities, and continuous feedback help learners understand how their efforts influence outcomes. At the community level, awareness programmes, support groups, skill development camps, and participation in local decision-making empower individuals to feel in control of their lives. At the school level, giving children responsibilities, offering choices, encouraging effort-based rewards, teaching

problem-solving, and involving parents through guidance sessions helps them develop an internal locus of control from an early age. At family level socialisation of children with androgynous traits, providing guidance and support to encourage age-appropriate autonomy and responsibility, building competence through problem solving, modeling internal mindset, self analysis and personal growth etc are essential.

In conclusion, strengthening internal locus of control through education, empowerment and equitable opportunities can enhance resilience, self-efficacy and adaptive functioning among youth. Interventions promoting critical thinking, autonomy-supportive teaching and socio-economic upliftment are essential to nurture a generation capable of self-directed growth and meaningful contribution to society.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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