

## EXAMINING LOCUS OF CONTROL AND GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY AMONG THE STUDENTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

**Soumita Chakraborty<sup>1\*</sup>, MAM Sameem<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Prarthita Biswas<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Indira Gandhi Teachers' Training College, West Bengal, India; Former Counsellor, West Bengal Health Department, India.

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts and Culture, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka, Oluvil, Sri Lanka.

<sup>3</sup> Principal, Jangipur College [(Govt. Aided & affiliated to the University of Kalyani) (A NAAC Accredited B++ College)] Jangipur, Murshidabad, West Bengal, India.

\*Corresponding Author Email: [soumita.rith@gmail.com](mailto:soumita.rith@gmail.com)

### Abstract

Bandura (1977) noted that assured success in a particular situation constitutes self-efficacy. He further stated that although self-efficacy is critical in determining academic achievement, individuals form their perceptions by interpreting information influenced by various sources. Students' perceptions and convictions regarding their aptitude for scholastic success and their assurance of their ability to finish academic tasks and effectively engage in the subject matter. People can succeed because positive self-efficacy beliefs strengthen commitment, effort, and perseverance. On the contrary, students with low self-efficacy levels are more likely to evade, postpone, or abandon their academic tasks. In 1985, Philip Zimbardo defined the locus of control orientation as "a perspective regarding whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent upon our actions (external control orientation) or on circumstances beyond our control" (internal control orientation). An individual's locus of control can influence the motivation for engaging in behaviour and the response to life events. When necessary, individuals are more likely to take action to alter their circumstances if they believe they have agency over their fate. Conversely, individuals may exhibit diminished motivation to initiate change if they perceive the outcome as uncontrollable. This research aimed to study locus of control and general self-efficacy among middle school students. A total of 67 students (33 boys and 34 girls) from classes VII and VIII of an English medium school in West Bengal were selected for the study. In this instance, purposive sampling was utilized. Levenson's locus of control scale (Levenson, 1973) and the general self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer et al., 1999) were administered. Utilization of psychological measures to gather data, with subsequent interpretation predicated on applying correlation, t-tests and fundamental descriptive statistics. The study's results revealed a positive relation between a sense of general self-efficacy and locus of control and a significantly higher sense of self-efficacy among female middle school learners. Potential confounding factors that could account for the observed results include variations in structural components, such as school characteristics, and socio-cultural impact.

**Keywords:** Locus of control, Middle School Learners, Self-efficacy.

## Introduction

Education is a systematic and purposeful undertaking aimed at imparting knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are essential for individuals to adapt and navigate their surroundings proficiently. The major objective of this initiative is to facilitate the realisation of individual self-actualization and to encourage the advancement of social and economic well-being for the betterment of humanity. In the context of the Indian education system, the evaluation of academic performance predominantly relies on the quantitative assessment of marks attained in year-end examinations. The allocation of time towards educational pursuits constitutes a significant percentage of an adolescent's existence, with these achievements exerting a profound impact on several aspects of their life trajectory. Specifically, they shape the decisions made in relation to academic pursuits, career goals, psychosocial growth, and overall welfare. The performance of individuals is mostly influenced by their psycho-physiological makeup, whereby persons who possess good physical and mental health are more inclined to attain success. The importance of overall well-being cannot be overstated, as it serves as a fundamental element in the formation of character during adolescence, a period that is of utmost significance for the development of one's identity.

Numerous empirical investigations have demonstrated a significant correlation between an individual's accomplishments and several psychological dimensions, including self-concept (Sewasew, et al., 2019), personality traits (Smith, et al., 2019), emotional intelligence (Piqueras et al., 2019), as well as contextual influences. Self-efficacy beliefs and locus of control are significant factors that contribute to the achievement of these outcomes. The cultivation of positive self-beliefs and a sense of personal agency contributes to the creation of an ideal learning environment. Observational learning, as proposed by Bandura (1977), is a cognitive process wherein individuals acquire new reactions by witnessing and imitating the behaviour of others. This form of learning, known as vicarious learning, allows individuals to acquire knowledge and skills through indirect experiences. In 1985, Philip Zimbardo introduced the concept of locus of control orientation, which plays a significant role in determining whether the results of actions are influenced by internal or external factors. Zimbardo proposed that this orientation has a reciprocal relationship with the development of self-efficacy. Numerous studies provide empirical evidence supporting the substantial correlation between self-efficacy and academic accomplishments. This study investigates the psychological constructs of locus of control and self-efficacy among female adolescent pupils in the West Bengal region of India, given the aforementioned fact. The construct known as locus of control pertains to an individual's perception of the degree of influence they possess over the outcomes and circumstances in their life. The concept of an internal locus of control implies a belief in personal action, whereas an external locus of control implies the attribution of control to external forces or fate. On the other hand, self-efficacy pertains to an individual's level of assurance in their ability to effectively engage in tasks and achieve desired outcomes. These psychological concepts are essential in elucidating the behavioural patterns, cognitive processes, and academic outcomes exhibited by adolescents. Now the question is how these variables have an effect on learners, respective academic qualities, gender, and medium of

instruction and aiming to derive ideas to manage these variables to improve the academic achievement of secondary (or elementary) school students.

Thus, this study seeks to investigate the impact of psychological factors such as general self-efficacy and locus of control within the group of boys and girls in middle school and also determine the status of the group of boys in comparison to their female counterparts in terms of the above-mentioned variables.

The researcher aims to achieve the following objectives with this research:

- To investigate the relationships between locus of control and general self-efficacy and (two affective learning needs) among the students of middle school.
- To determine the status of locus of control by varying demographical variables like gender among the students of middle school.
- To determine the status of sense of general self-efficacy by varying demographical variables like gender among the students of middle school.
- To investigate the impact of various aspects of self-efficacy and locus of control (two affective learning needs) among the students of middle school.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the psychological perspectives of adolescent middle school learners of South Bengal, this study used a quantitative survey research methodology. To identify gender disparities and potential influencing factors, the researcher conducted a comparative analysis of these perspectives across two different genders (male-female). With an emphasis on West Bengali middle school students, the study's findings are anticipated to add to the body of research already available on teenage psychology. When making decisions on how to enhance students' academic accomplishment from the perspective of socio-psychological factors, it will help the school's educational stakeholders—teachers and administrators in particular.

### **Review of the existing literature on the chosen topic**

This literature review analyses research on locus of control and self-efficacy, focusing on middle school students. It emphasizes the importance of understanding psychological dynamics related to these concepts for designing educational and developmental interventions. Albert Bandura (1993, 1997) studied self-efficacy beliefs and their impact on behaviour, performance, and situational adaptation highlighting the influence of culture on individuals' perceptions of their capabilities. The review emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of these concepts to effectively design educational and developmental interventions in these unique socio-cultural and environmental contexts.

Abraham, N. and Rajlakshmi V. R. (2019) studied self-efficacy and locus of control among 260 Kerala school students and found no significant relationship between these factors and no gender difference in their levels. The study used the General self-efficacy scale and the Locus of control scale, and analyzed data using Spearman correlation and Mann-Whitney U tests. However, the ex-post-facto research study (N=500) by Adeyinka et al. (2011) analyzed the predictors of academic achievement in junior secondary school students and found that locus of control, interest in schooling, and self-efficacy significantly contribute to the prediction of academic achievement.

The results suggest that these factors can be used to enhance students' academic performance. Another study by Alias, M. et al. (2016) looked at the connections between engineering students' academic success, locus of control, emotional learning demands, and self-efficacy. In a survey of 410 students from two technical institutions in Malaysia, it was shown that while both genders had equal locus of control and levels of commitment to their studies, female students had greater levels of self-efficacy. The study discovered that while self-efficacy is associated with efforts, locus of control is related to academic accomplishment. Aniljose, P. S. and Reshma, J. (2021) studied adolescents and found no significant relationship between self-esteem and locus of control. The study involved 120 students from higher secondary schools in Kerala, divided into male and female groups. Statistical tools like correlation and t-test were used, and the data was analyzed using SPSS. The research was conducted by Deora, N. (2015) and examined the impact of gender, academic self-efficacy, and locus of control on academic achievement in 11th-standard students aged 15-18. Results showed a significant relationship between academic self-efficacy and achievement, but no significant relationship existed between locus of control and academic achievement. The interaction effect was also not significant. Kumaravelu, G. et al. (2018) examined the relationship between locus of control and academic achievement among 380 high school students in the Puducherry region. Results showed no significant difference in internal, external, or chance locus of control among male and female students. However, female students scored higher in English, mathematics, and science subjects. The study also found a positive correlation between academic achievement, gender, academic self-efficacy, and locus of control, but a negative correlation between these factors. Mahi, S. (2020) conducted a study on locus of control among socially disadvantaged secondary school students about self-concept and self-efficacy. The study involved 800 students from Govt. and Private Schools in Gurgaon, Haryana. Results showed no significant difference in scores, but a strong positive correlation between locus of control and self-efficacy. A study was conducted by Ogunmakin, A. O. et al. (2013) to examine the impact of psychological factors on students' academic performance. The study involved 364 students from ten secondary schools and used standardized instruments. Results showed that academic self-efficacy and locus of control jointly predicted academic performance, with self-efficacy being the most significant predictor. The study by Sagone et al. (2014) examined the impact of self-concepts on locus of control and academic self-efficacy among three groups of university students (Psychology, Medicine, and Law). The research involved 267 Italian students aged 18-26, divided into three groups based on their degree course. Results showed that students who controlled their everyday life circumstances had a positive self-concept and perceived themselves as academically efficient.

Therefore, the majority of studies indicate that psychosocial factors such as locus of control and general self-efficacy are critical to students' performance and overall well-being, which is why character development is still relevant today. Thus, the current study aimed to investigate the locus of control and general effectiveness status of middle school students, their connections, and gender-specific scenarios.

## Rationale of the Study

The rationale for doing this study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the underlying factors and motivations that justify the need for further investigation in this particular area of research.

The objective of this study is to examine the levels of self-efficacy and locus of control in a sample of middle school male and female learners of South Bengal. In light of the significance of these constructs in relation to academic achievement and overall welfare, it was imperative to gain an understanding of the factors that influenced them. Male students usually encounter a tremendous career pressure to be financially independent as early as possible and gaining secure social status for family and self, while female students in middle school may encounter specific societal pressures and expectations, leading to the possibility of examining gender differences in these variables. The potential variability of these variables is influenced by regional factors, as different regions possess diverse social, cultural, and educational characteristics. The research results have the potential to inform the development of educational policies and activities that are tailored to meet the specific needs of middle school girls in particular geographical areas. The study contributed to the existing body of knowledge by offering insights on the emergence of psychological traits across different regional contexts. In conclusion, mental health specialists and counsellors who work with individuals in this age group may find it beneficial to access data pertaining to self-efficacy and locus of control in middle school females. In general, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge regarding these dimensions and their impact on academic accomplishment and psychological well-being.

In brief, an examination of middle school learners' locus of control and self-efficacy in research could offer valuable understanding of the contextual and developmental factors that impact schooling, gender-specific support initiatives, and psychological welfare.

## Statement of the Problem

The difficulty at hand is that there is a lack of clarity or understanding regarding a certain issue or situation. The existing corpus of research suggests that self-efficacy and locus of control are important psychological concepts that have a substantial impact on the lives of adolescent learners in middle school. The conceptions of the mentioned variables with respect to gender disparities are another crucial area to explore. Hence, the current research, entitled "**Examining Locus of Control and General Self-Efficacy among the Students of Middle School: A Comparative Study**" aimed to investigate the intricate and interrelated effects of the aforementioned psychological factors on middle school male and female learners of South Bengal.

The operational definition refers to a clear and concise explanation of how a specific variable or concept is measured or observed in a scientific study.

## Operation Definition of the Terms

- **Locus of control**- refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Understanding of the concept was developed by Julian B. Rotter in 1954 and

since then, it became an important aspect of personality studies. One's "locus" (Latin for "place" or "location") can either be internal (meaning the person believes that they control their life) or external (meaning they believe that their environment, some higher power, or other people control their decisions and their life).

- **Self-Efficacy** - is a belief of student in his or her innate ability to achieve goals. It plays an important role in competence of decision-making and problem solving. Self-efficacy is future oriented and related to the level of positive aspirations. Self-efficacy is a confidence level in relation to how successfully the students can complete a certain task.

Bandura (1997) defines 'self-efficacy' as "beliefs of people in their capabilities to generate desired effects by their own actions". A sense of self-efficacy is an important predictor of the accomplishment of further competences and successes. Smith (1989) defines self-efficacy as, "a person's judgment of his ability to perform an activity." Schunk (1985) defines self-efficacy as, "learned expectations that one is capable of carrying out behaviour or producing a desired outcome in a particular situation."

- **Middle School Learners'** - are the student of 6th and 8th standard/class/grade (for 11- to 14-year-olds). As per NPE, 2020 it is middle school student.

### Objectives of the Study

- To investigate the relationships between locus of control and general self-efficacy and (two affective learning needs) among the middle school learner.
- To determine the status of locus of control by varying demographical variables like gender among the students of middle school.
- To determine the status of sense of general self-efficacy by varying demographical variables like gender among the students of middle school.
- To investigate the impact of various aspects of self-efficacy and locus of control (two affective learning needs) among the students of middle school.

### Hypotheses

1. There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and locus of control among the group of middle school students.
2. There is a significant gender difference in self-efficacy among the group of middle school students.
3. There is a significant gender difference in locus of control among the group of middle school students.

### Methodology

The methodology employed in this study encompasses a systematic approach to conducting research and gathering data.

**Design:** In this study, researchers followed the descriptive survey method.

**Sample:** The sample for the present study had been drawn from the adolescent female and male middle school learners (Age range-11-14 years) from a private school in South 24 Pgs. district in West Bengal, India. Sample size 67 and they based on **inclusion criterias**. These were-

- The students of age range of 11 to 14 are included.
- Student are physically and mentally fit and fine.
- Student who does not have any history of physical illness are been included.
- Student who does not have history of psychiatric illness are been included.
- All the sample are hailing from same suburb.

**Tools:** For the collection of data, the researchers employed a standardized questionnaire form along with information blank.

Description of the tools

**The Information Schedule:** An information schedule was specially prepared for this war with a view to elicit the following information.

1. Name, age, sex, address, phone number, mother-tongue, religious background, educational background of the sample.
2. Family history was elicited through a joint family type, number of family members, number of children in family, birth order of the sample, number of earning members, father's and mother's occupation.
3. Personal history has elicited the point like any medical history of physical illness, psychiatric illness, favourite leisure time activities aim of life etc.

- Other tools used for the study

| Variable         | Tool  | Developer                   | Likert type   | Validity/ Reliability                                      |
|------------------|---|-----------------------------|---------------|--|
| Locus of control | Levenson's Locus of Control Scale (Revised) | Levenson, 1981              | 6-point scale | Cronbach's alpha of the subscales ranged from 0.56 to 0.67 |
| Self-Efficacy    | The generalized self-efficacy scale (GSES)  | Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995 | 4-point scale | The Cronbach's alpha- 0.76 and 0.90                        |

**Data of collection procedure**

The students were selected according to the inclusion criteria already mentioned. Rapport was established with the subject and then verbal consent was taken. they were assured that the information would be kept assertively confidential and will be used for academic purposes only. Data was collected in the following predetermined sequence as far as presentation tools were concerned.

1. Information blank

2. Levenson Multidimensional Locus of Control Scales by Levenson, H. (1973).
3. General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) by Schwarzer, R., & Jerusalem, M. (1995).

**Statistical techniques:** The data of responses of the participants were calculated and analysed by using the following statistics such as mean, SD, correlation and t-test.

**Delimitation of the study:** The study was delimited to 66 adolescent learners of private English medium school of South 24 Pgs. district in West Bengal, India.

**Analysis and Interpretation**

**Hypothesis 1:** There is a significant relationship between self-efficacy and locus of control among the group of middle school students

Table 1. Correlation between locus of control and self-efficacy among the group of adolescent girl students of the north and south Bengal regions.

|  | N  | r     | p     |
|--|----|-------|-------|
| Locus of control and General self-efficacy | 67 | 0.136 | =.273 |

Here, analysis of the above table indicates that the Pearson correlation results show a non-significant small positive relationship between X and Y ( $r(65) = .136, p = .273$ ), means a non-significant small degree of positive correlation between locus control (x) and self-efficacy (y) persists among the present group of middle school learners.

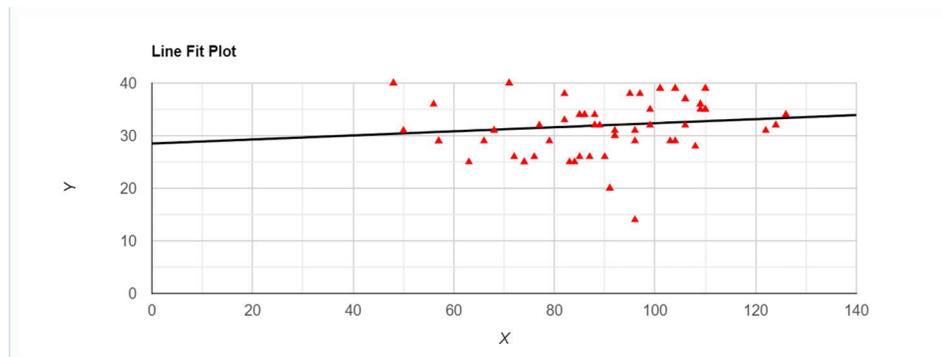


Fig. 1: Scattergram of correlation between locus control (x) and self-efficacy (y) among the female teenage school students.

Hence, there is a no significant relationship between self-efficacy and locus of control among the present group of middle school students,  $H_1$  is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is significant gender difference in self-efficacy among the group of middle school students

Table 2: Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error of Mean, Number of adolescents, Standard Error of the difference, Degrees of Freedom, t and p value of gain scores on gender difference in general self-efficacy scale between the group of male and female middle school learners.

| General self-efficacy in the group of male middle school learner |                 |                  |                | General self-efficacy in the group of female middle school learner |                 |                  |                | SE <sub>D</sub> | df | t value | p value |
|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------|--|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|----|---------|---------|
| M <sub>1</sub>   | SD <sub>1</sub> | SEM <sub>1</sub> | N <sub>1</sub> | M <sub>2</sub>   | SD <sub>2</sub> | SEM <sub>2</sub> | N <sub>2</sub> |                 |    |         |         |
| 30.27  | 4.91            | 0.85             | 33             | 33.65  | 5.47            | 0.93             | 34             | 1.27            | 65 | 2.659*  | 0.0099  |

\* Significant at both level (0.05 and 0.01)

Results shows, the t-table value with degrees of freedom (df) = 65 at 0.01 level is 2.65 and at 0.05 level is 2.00. The calculated t-value is 2.659 followed by p value 0.0099, which is greater than the t-table value at 0.05 level of significance and slightly greater at 0.01 level.

Hence, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. Thus, there exists significant difference between the group of male and female students in terms general self-efficacy scale.

Hypothesis 3: There is significant gender difference in locus of control among the group of middle school students

Table 3: Mean, Standard Deviation, Standard Error of Mean, Number of adolescents, Standard Error of the difference, Degrees of Freedom, t and p value of gain scores on gender difference in locus of control scale between the group of male and female middle school learners.

| Locus of control in the group of male middle school learner |                 |                  |                | Locus of control in the group of female middle school learner |                 |                  |                | SE <sub>D</sub> | df | t value | p value |
|---|-----------------|------------------|----------------|---|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|----|---------|---------|
| M <sub>1</sub>  | SD <sub>1</sub> | SEM <sub>1</sub> | N <sub>1</sub> | M <sub>2</sub>  | SD <sub>2</sub> | SEM <sub>2</sub> | N <sub>2</sub> |                 |    |         |         |
| 87.96   | 15.50           | 2.69             | 33             | 92  | 21.84           | 3.74             | 34             | 4.63            | 65 | 0.870   | 0.3871  |

Results shows, the t-table value with degrees of freedom (df) = 65 at 0.05 level is 2.00. The calculated t-value is 0.870 followed by p value 0.3871, which is much less than the t-table value at 0.05 level of significance.

Hence, the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Thus, there no significant difference between the group of male and female students in terms locus of control.

## Discussion

The study investigates the association between locus of control and self-efficacy in adolescents attending middle school in the South Bengal region. The findings reveal a favorable correlation, highlighting the significance of understanding their personal development, academic performance, and overall well-being. Although the observed correlation lacks statistical significance, it is worth noting that there exists a positive association between the variables discussed. This association suggests that individuals who believe in their ability to exercise control over events also exhibit higher levels of self-efficacy. Consequently, this can foster self-confidence and a robust belief in one's skills. This approach can generate substantial benefits within the realm of challenging and undermining traditional gender norms and stereotypes. The incorporation of a considerable dataset has the potential to yield statistically significant and robust positive outcomes.

Previous research has indicated that the possession of elevated levels of self-efficacy exerts a noteworthy impact on academic achievement, as it facilitates the cultivation of ambitious educational objectives and augments motivation for both genders. However, it has been seen that girls tend to exhibit more outstanding scores in this particular characteristic. The impact of perceived control and resilience on girls can be observed, as individuals who believe in their capacity to exercise power are more likely to adopt a problem-solving approach when faced with challenges. Hence, it may be argued that women with a heightened perception of their talents are likelier to have elevated levels of proactivity, motivation, and resilience, leading to improved academic performance and an increased sense of fulfillment.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that this connection does not imply a causal relationship. Several elements, such as cultural influences, familial support, and educational experiences, may affect these notions. The concepts can be additionally shaped by socioeconomic circumstances and prospects for upward social mobility (Pajares, F., 2002).

The psychological maturation of teenagers plays a pivotal role in fostering the development of self-efficacy and self-control. This phenomenon can be attributed to the development of cognitive and emotional capacities associated with an increased sense of personal agency.

There needs to be more significant differentiation between adolescent boys and females in South Bengal regarding their locus of control. The elements contained within this category include gender roles prevalent in suburban areas, socioeconomic advancements, shifts in educational methodologies, social support structures, and the presence of role models, as well as media and

technological availability. This phenomenon can also be ascribed to the proximity to the state capital.

All individuals engaged in learning can acquire or employ specific resources or information. There is a positive correlation between students' enrollment in institutions with sufficient infrastructure and proactive promotion of self-confidence, leadership skills, and personal initiative and their tendency to demonstrate similar degrees of self-management and perceived control over their environment, regardless of gender. Moreover, the support supply from familial and communal sources can cultivate such cognitive frameworks. Numerous studies indicate that regional and urban-rural disparities can shape the development of self-efficacy and locus of control. These differences span a wide array of unique experiences, which can be attributed to the impact of urbanization.

### **Major findings**

- The research may uncover variations in cognitive and emotional development among middle school learner in specific geographical areas, subsequently impacting their self-efficacy and locus of control beliefs.
- There exists a correlation between self-efficacy and locus of control beliefs among adolescent students in educational settings.
- There may be notable disparities in the overall perception of self-efficacy among male and female middle school students. The findings of the study indicate that female students demonstrated a significantly better level of general self-efficacy compared to their male counterparts.
- There are no notable variations in the locus of control beliefs among the male and female middle school learners. Both groups demonstrated a similar degree of locus of control.

### **Limitations**

There are certain constraints or restrictions that need to be acknowledged and considered within the context of this.

- The generalizability of the study findings to different geographical regions and age cohorts is uncertain.
- The self-reported measures may be influenced by the presence of social desirability bias. Additionally, unmeasured factors have the potential to alter both locus of control and self-efficacy.

### **The following recommendations are suggested**

Undoubtedly, this study holds significant importance in the realm of academic accomplishment research. It is crucial to acknowledge the implications of this phenomenon for educational and therapy contexts. The cultivation of an internal locus of control is crucial for students, as it enables them to consistently attribute their achievements to their personal endeavours. It is recommended that legislators incorporate within educational frameworks measures aimed at fostering the

development of goal-setting skills, suitable learning styles, self-perception, and time management skills among secondary school students. Authorities will take measures to enhance their self-efficacy beliefs in themselves and their academic pursuits. Efforts should be made to address geographical disparities, as it is a key objective of the National Education Policy, 2020, which aims to provide quality education throughout the country. Therefore, it is imperative for academic professionals and stakeholders to guarantee that learners are provided with equitable opportunities to thrive and develop effectively.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt about the fact that this study is very important as far as research on academic achievement is concerned. Essentially, it is imperative to mention its implication for educational and counselling applications. There is a need for students to develop a locus of control (internal) for them to be able to always attribute their success to their own efforts. The policymakers should include in the educational blueprints strategies that will help pupils right from secondary school to develop goal-setting skills, appropriate learning style (studying style), perception of self, and time management skills. Authorities will make arrangements to promote their sense of efficacy and beliefs about themselves and their academic activities.

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