

**SELF-ESTEEM, LOCUS OF CONTROL AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC UNDERACHIEVEMENT IN RIVERS STATE, NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study investigated the relationship between self-esteem, locus of control and academic underachievement among some secondary school adolescents. The study was carried out in Rivers State secondary schools. Purposive sampling techniques were used to draw a sample of 240 students identified as underachievers. Bakare's (1977) progressive matrices adopted from Uwazurike (2008) was used to identify students with high mental ability while Basic Education Certificate Examination results of 2016 which is a cumulative record of examination and continuous assessment scores of the students' three years in school, was used as a measure of students' academic ability. Based on the attained mental ability performance and academic achievement of the students, the academic underachievers were identified. The various independent variables of the study were measured with a questionnaire whose reliabilities were statistically determined with Cronbach Alpha and reliability coefficients ranging from 0.51 to 0.74. The research questions were answered with mean and Pearson product moment correlation ( $r$ ) while the null hypotheses were tested with special Z to determine the significance of  $r$ . It was found out that there was a very low relationship between self-esteem, internal locus of control, external locus of control and academic underachievement which showed no statistical significance. Based on the findings, three relevant recommendations were made.*

**KEYWORDS:** Self-Esteem, Locus of Control, Underachievement, Academic, Students

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of any nation is hinged on solid educational foundation for its citizens. This suggests that education is a means of effecting changes in the society in order to build a well-developed country. The objective of education includes creativity, objectivity and intellectual adventure. Education enables a child to develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally and intellectually. Education is the key to creating a society, which is dynamic and productive, offering opportunity and fairness to all. Therefore, it is axiomatic that efforts should be geared towards maintaining high standards in schools. The standards will be reflected in students' academic achievement. However, like in all other facets of national planning and development, education has its own share of poignant challenges; one of such problem is the issue of academic underachievement.

The issue of academic underachievement is one of great concern, especially because it is not a problem only among gifted learners but prevails at all ability levels. Rayneri, Gerber and Wiley (2006) mention that academic underachievement is a national problem in most countries of the world. In addition, Matthews and McBee (2007) indicate that the topic of academic underachievement has intrigued educators for quite some time and is an ongoing concern. It seems that there is little consensus on how best to define academic underachievement. Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006) defined academic underachievement as performing below

potential while Reis and McCoach (2000) define it as a discrepancy between ability and achievement.

From these varying definitions it can be deduced that academic underachievers are a diverse population, and that both gifted and non-gifted learners can underachieve. In general, academic underachievement is defined as failure to meet the academic requirements of the school setting (Connor, 2002). One might think that underachieving learners lack motivation, but Mandel and Marcus (as cited in Reiss, 2008) asserted that underachievers are, in fact, highly motivated in directions other than getting good grades. This implies that academic underachievement can also result from extracurricular circumstances that distract youngsters from paying attention to their schoolwork. Young people, especially adolescents in secondary schools who fail to utilize their potential waste educational and occupational opportunities that are within their reach. Consequently, a brief explanation of the concept of adolescence and adolescent will suffice at this juncture.

There are essentially three major stages in human post natal development namely childhood, adolescence and adulthood. According to Colman (2003) adolescence is the period of development from the onset of puberty to the attainment of adulthood, beginning with the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics usually between 11 and 13 years of age continuing through the teenage years and terminating legally at the age of majority, usually 18 years of age. Whereas an adolescent is a person in a period of adolescence; adolescence is essentially characterized by a sudden spurt in physical growth. All adolescents undergo significant changes in size, shape and physical capacities. Many also experience substantial changes in their social lives, reasoning abilities and views of themselves (Bernstein, Penner, Clarke-Stewart & Roy, 2006). Based on the age at which adolescence starts and ends, it is apparent that most secondary school students are adolescents. Therefore, their academic achievement or underachievement becomes an issue that cannot be overlooked by any country of the world bearing in mind that they are the future of the nation.

Based on the forgoing and personal experience of the researcher there are other factors associated with academic underachievement, such as psychological factors. Psychological factors are innumerable however; the variables to be investigated in this study in relation to academic underachievement include; self-esteem and locus of control. Self-esteem as one of the psychological variables is a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his own work. Sheslow (2008), defined self-esteem as how much one values himself or herself and how important one thinks he is. It encompasses beliefs and emotions, and the behaviour displayed by the person. Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2007) in their study asserted that academic underachievers worry over self-esteem, self-concept, and self-efficacy. In addition, they opined that individuals with positive self-esteem generally feel as though they are worthwhile and deserve respect. It can be concluded that those learners whose self-esteem is low do not believe in their own ability to do well in school and are, therefore, in danger of underachieving.

Locus of control refers to an individual's perception about the underlying main cause of events in his/her life (Edglossary, 2013). It has to do with believe about whether the outcomes of our actions are contingent on what we do (internal control orientation) or an event outside our personal control (external control orientation). Based on the above background, the researchers deemed it fit and necessary to investigate how psychological variables of self-esteem and locus of control relate to students' academic underachievement among secondary school adolescents in Rivers State. Sequel to the fact that underachievement of capable children is an area of concern for many parents and educators.

## REVIEW OF RELATED EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Troncone, Drammis and Labella (2014) investigated personality traits, self-esteem and academic achievement in secondary school students in Campania, Italy. The article emphasized that for years educators have attempted to identify the effective predictors of scholastic achievement and several personality variables were described as significantly correlated with grade performance. Since one of the crucial practical implications of identifying the factors involved in academic achievement is to facilitate the teaching-learning process, the main variables that have been associated with achievement should be investigated simultaneously in order to provide information as to their relative merit in the population examined. In contrast with this premise, limited research has been conducted on the importance of personality traits and self-esteem on scholastic achievement. To this aim in a sample of 439 subjects (225 males) with an average age of 12.36 years ( $SD = .99$ ) from three first level secondary school classes of Southern Italy, personality traits, as defined by the Five Factor Model, self-esteem and socioeconomic status were evaluated. The academic results correlated significantly both with personality traits and with some dimensions of self-esteem. Moreover, hierarchical regression analyses brought to light, in particular, the predictive value of openness to experience on academic marks. The results, stressing the multidimensional nature of academic performance, indicate a need to adopt complex approaches for undertaking action addressing students' difficulties in attaining good academic achievement.

Academic underachievement, self-esteem and self-efficacy in decision making were investigated by Filippello, Sorrenti, Larcan and Rizzo (2013). The aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between decision making styles, self-esteem and self-beliefs about decision-making ability and the differences linked to academic performance. A sample of 100 students split into two groups aged 15-16 years and 17-18 years participated in the study. All subjects compiled the Multidimensional Self-esteem Test for the evaluation of academic success and competence of environmental control and How I Make my Choices (H.M.C. – Filippello et al., 2011), a structured interview, specifically designed to measure decision-making styles in two different contexts (school context vs. social context) and decision-making self-efficacy (Low vs. High Self-efficacy in making decisions).

McLaughlin (2013) conducted an analysis of the effect of relationship status on Self-Esteem and Academic Performance. The article opined that self-esteem is a complex construct that has been defined in various ways due to the numerous research studies that have been done in regards to this topic. The purpose of this paper was to present evidence of self-esteem in regards to relationship status and academic performance; both of these variables may be directly related to self-esteem levels in college students. The hypothesis was that the relationship status of an individual positively affects one's self-esteem level and their overall grade point average. Analysis of the data from 100 participants found that there was no significant statistical association between relationship status and self-esteem. However, data collected from the participants showed significant statistics that participants involved in a relationship have a higher grade point average. This information is beneficial in order to gain a better understanding of the relationship between relationship status, self-esteem, and academic performance.

Pullmann and Allik (2008) conducted a research on the relations of academic and general self-esteem to school achievement. The study demonstrates on a nationally representative sample of Estonian students and university applicants ( $N = 4572$ ) that although self-reported academic self-esteem is a strong and accurate predictor of school achievement, additionally rather low,

not high, general self-esteem is a significant predictor of superior school performance when academic self-esteem and multi-collinearity is controlled for. Two compensatory mechanisms defensive pessimism and self-protective enhancement may explain the paradox of low self-esteem: academically successful students have a more critical view on themselves and students with more modest academic abilities compensate for their academic under-achievement by elevating their general self-esteem. Children start to use self-protective enhancement but from age 12 to 14 they also start using defensive pessimism to protect themselves from the consequences of failure.

Vialle, Heaven, and Ciarrochi (2005) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in high ability students: Evidence from the Wollongong Youth Study. The article emphasized that the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement is one that is regarded by many educators as a well-established fact. This belief has been often invoked in order to argue against the provision of ability grouping for gifted students. Refuting that commonly-held belief, this research examined the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement in 65 high-ability secondary students, a sample drawn from a longitudinal study of over 900 students. The research demonstrated that there were no differences in measured self-esteem between the gifted and non-gifted students. More contentiously, though, the research found no correlation between self-esteem and academic achievement for the gifted group.

Nwankwo, Balogun, Chukwudi and Ibeme (2012) investigated the relationship between self-esteem and locus of control among well functioning adolescents in the South Eastern Nigeria. Participants within the age range of 15-19 years were selected from two Secondary Schools in Enugu metropolis, Enugu State, Nigeria. The result showed that a significant positive relationship exist between high self-esteem and internal locus of control among well functioning adolescents ( $r = .46, p < 0.01$ ).

Abdullahi (2017) examined the relationship among achievements motivation, self-esteem, and locus of control and academic performance of university students in a Nigerian University. The purpose was to determine the extent university student's academic performance was influence by the criterion variables. One thousand, three hundred and thirty-five male and female university students from seven faculties participated in the study. They were selected by stratified cum simple random sampling techniques, result from multiple regression analysis revealed that clearly the subjective independent variables did not predict objective measure of the student academic performance. Psycho-sociological I evidences around the lack of achievement motivation and low self-esteem, creates in student lack of interest to strive for high academic performances, and zeal to contribute positively and efficiently to national development.

Obochi (2011) study focused on the relationships between self-esteem, causal attributions and academic in secondary school students in Bwari Area Council of Federal Capital Territory. The research sought to find out how self esteem and causal attribution interact with the students' academic achievement. Also, the research explored gender differences in self-esteem and causal attribution for success and failure. Six research questions guided the research and six hypotheses were tested. The design of the study was survey and sample size was 191 participant comprising 90 males and 101 females from five secondary schools in Bwari Area Council, FCT. Two standardized questionnaires were used, the Academic Causal Attribution Scale which is a five point scale questionnaire and Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale which is a four – point scale questionnaire. Academic achievement was measured by the term result of a

standardized examination given to the students by the education board. The data were analysed using Pearson product Moment Correlation to test relationships and Independent sample t-test to test differences between variables. At 0.01 level of significant, self- esteem was positively associated with academic achievement so also internal attribution for success. At 0.05 significant level, external attributions for success was negatively related to academic achievement. At 0.01 alpha level, external attributions for failure was related to academic achievement. No gender difference was discovered in both self-esteem and internal or external attributions for success and failure. The implications are that students will benefit by giving internal explanations for occurrences in their life. Also students with low self esteem are to be guided and counseled so they could adjust well in school and life generally. It is therefore recommended that methods of building positive self-esteem and internal attribution be embraced by both parents and teachers.

Kaur (2016) conducted a study on a comparative study of locus of control in underachievers and normal achievers in India. The study aimed at estimating a percentage of underachievers in the sample of school students across the city of Chandigarh. It also aimed at studying self efficacy in underachievers in comparison to normal achievers. A sample of 105 students of class tenth, hailing from intact middle class families formed the sample. After initial identification of underachievers, both the groups were compared for the extent of externality. The t-ratio was found to be highly significant depicting that underachievers are high on the construct of externality.

Thangal, Joshi and Rajaguru (2016) investigated, locus of control of underachieving secondary school students in Lakshadweep. The article emphasized that Lakshadweep is the smallest Union Territory of India. These are the islands scattered in the Arabian Sea between 111 to 222 Nautical Miles off the coast of Kerala. Like other places of our country, in Lakshadweep, the scholastic achievement is the predominant term in the evaluation of the education system in recent days. Achievement of a child might be in par with their potential ability. In some cases their academic achievement may be remarkably lesser than their proven ability. These children are known as Underachievers. The Underachievers believe that his/her own effort did not affect the success or failure in the world. High achievers attribute success to their ability and failure to their lack of effort. This has been referred to as Locus of Control.

Majzub, Bataineh, Ishak and Rahman (2016) examined the relationship between Locus of Control and academic achievement, and discussed the possibility of gender differences selected Higher Education Institution in Jordan. Past research indicated a positive correlation relationship between internal scores and high academic achievement. Overall, the research regarding gender found males to be more internal and external than females. The sample of this study included 204 first year Yarmouk University students, from four different departments (English, Accounting, Chemistry and Engineering). The multidimensional- multi-attributitional causality scales (MMCS) was administered to the respondents of the study. The MMCS were then correlated with academic achievement and gender. The statistical analysis evidenced a correlation between Locus of Control and academic achievement, The internal locus of control were high and positively correlated with academic achievement among the male students ( $r = .362, p = .000$ ) and positively correlated with external locus of control ( $r = -.208, p = .035$ ). However only the internal locus of control was positively correlated with academic achievement among female students ( $r = .274, p = .006$ ) and negatively correlated with external locus of control ( $r = .002, p = .982$ ). The findings showed that males were more internal and



external then females. Overall, this study supported the findings of past research supporting a positive relationship between Locus of Control and academic achievement.

Hasan and Khalid (2014) investigated the academic locus of control of high and low achieving undergraduate students. It also explored the gender differences in terms of academic locus of control and the relationship between academic locus of control and academic achievement. Sample of the study consisted of 187 (126 high and 61 low) achieving B.Sc final year students. Independent group research design and purposive sampling technique was used in this study. Academic locus of control scale developed by Trice was administered. The scale classifies the students having scores from 0-14 as internals and with the score above than 14 as externals. Two –Factor ANOVA, correlation and simple linear regression was used to analyze the data. Results indicated a significant main effect of achiever and gender and no interaction between gender and achiever was found. High achieving students scored low on academic locus of control which indicates their strong internal academic orientation than low achieving students. Interestingly study indicated that high as well as low achieving students both hold an internal academic belief system towards the academic situations. Women are significantly high on an internal academic locus of control indicating less internal academic orientation than men. Results also indicated a significant inverse relationship between academic locus of control and GPA and simple linear regression indicated that academic locus of control is a predictor of GPA. The study has wide implications for the psychologists, educationists, teachers and students.

Adu and Oshati (2014) examined psychological variables (study habit; locus of control and self-efficacy) as correlate of students' academic achievement in secondary school certificate Economics. The study adopted a survey research design of the ex-post facto type. A purposive sampling technique was used to select sample. Data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation and multiple regression statistics. The findings revealed that the study habit made the greatest contribution to their achievement in Economics ( $b = .653$ ;  $p < .05$ ). This is followed by locus of control ( $b = .580$ ;  $p < .05$ ). These two variables made contributions which are significant. Only self-efficacy made no significant contribution to their achievement in Economics ( $b = .450$ ;  $p > .05$ ). It is, therefore, recommended that these factors should be taken into consideration in order to enhance the understanding of economics.

Uwazurike (2008) investigated the extent to which some psycho-social factors such as locus of control, study habit, self-concept, test anxiety, parenting styles, absenteeism and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be associated with academic underachievement usually found among some students. The study was carried out in Imo state secondary schools. Purposive sampling techniques were used to draw a sample of 230 students identified as underachievers. Bakare's (1977) progressive matrices was used to identify students with high mental ability while junior school certificate examination result of 2007 which is a cumulative record of examination and continuous assessment scores of the students' three years in school, was used as a measure of students' academic ability.

Based on the attained mental ability performance and academic achievement of the students, the academic underachievers were identified. The various independent variables of the study were measured with self-rating instruments whose reliabilities were statistically determined with Cronbach alpha. The research questions were answered with self-rating instruments whose reliabilities were statistically determined with as a measure of association between academic underachievement and the various independent variables while the null hypotheses were tested with special Z to determine the significance of r. Furthermore, t-test and analysis

of variance were used where applicable to test whether the association was significant. It was found out that significant association existed between academic underachievement and students' locus of control, study habit, self-concept, parenting styles, absenteeism, test anxiety and post traumatic stress disorder.

Moore (2006) investigated the prevalence of test anxiety and locus of control orientation in three groups of middle school students: Achieving Gifted (AG), Underachieving Gifted (UAG), and Non-gifted (NG) students. Two instruments were used in the study: the Test Anxiety Inventory (TAI) and the Children's Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (CNSIE). Participants completed the TAI by indicating their level of agreement with 20 statements that measure test anxiety symptoms before, during, and after a testing session. Responses ranged between Almost Never (1) and Almost Always (4). Participants completed the CNSIE by selecting Yes or No to indicate whether or not each of 25 statements described their feelings about a variety of situations. Although none of the groups received extreme scores on either instrument, a 3 x 2 MANOVA indicated significant differences between the groups by gender and achievement classification (AG, UAG, and NG).

Underachieving gifted students were more externally oriented than achieving gifted students. There was also a significant difference in the locus of control orientation between achieving gifted and non-gifted students; non-gifted students were more externally controlled than achieving gifted students. In regards to underachievers, males were more externally controlled than females. Regarding test anxiety, females consistently reported higher levels of anxiety than males. Findings suggest the need for school interventions to reduce test anxiety among females and to assist students in developing the thought processes that give them a sense of control over the events in their life, in particular, their academic performance.

Abdullahi (2017) examined the relationship among achievements motivation, self-esteem, and locus of control and academic performance of university students in a Nigerian University. The purpose was to determine the extent university student's academic performance was influence by the criterion variables. One thousand, three hundred and thirty-five male and female university students from seven faculties participated in the study. They were selected by stratified cum simple random sampling techniques, result from multiple regression analysis revealed that clearly the subjective independent variables did not predict objective measure of the student academic performance. Psycho-sociological evidences abound the lack of achievement motivation and low self-esteem, creates in student lack of interest to strive for high academic performances, and zeal to contribute positively and efficiently to national development.

However, the present researchers have observed that most of the previous studies on students' academic underachievement were conducted outside Rivers State which justified the need for the study. Hence, this present study was carried out to establish the extent of relationship that exists between self-esteem, locus of control (internal and external) and secondary school adolescents' academic underachievement in Rivers State, Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The design adopted in this study was a correlational design, which was aimed at finding out the relationship between psychological and family demographic variables with academic

underachievement among secondary school adolescents in Rivers state. According to Nworgu (2005), correlational design seeks to establish what relationship exists between two or more variables. Usually such studies indicate the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, Nwankwo (2013) refers to correlational study as that which involves the collection of two or more sets of data from a group of subjects with the attempt to determine the subsequent relationship between those sets of data. From the above definitions and explanations, correlational design is the study that involves the determination of relationship between two or more variables, and the design normally indicates the direction and magnitude of the relationship.

The population of the study consisted of all the secondary school two (SS II) adolescent students in 245 senior secondary schools in Rivers State. A sample of 240 senior school 11 students was drawn from 2, 301 students. Bakare's mental ability test was administered on them those who scored 45 – 60 were termed above average intellectual capacity and intellectually superior and Basic Education Certificate Examination result (2016) were used for the final sample, numbering 240 underachievers. Therefore, the final sample size was 240 students with purposive sampling technique. Three instruments were used in this study namely: Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) results (2016) showing students subject grades, Bakare Progressive Matrices (1977) (BPM) modified from Raven SPM (1958) adopted from Uwazurike (2008). The researcher consulted her supervisors and two other experts in the field of Measurement and Evaluation, from University of Port Harcourt for face and content validity of the research Instrument (PVAS). The experts were required to subject the research instruments to thorough scrutiny with a view of establishing the face and content validity in terms of the clarity, appropriateness, relevance, and representativeness of the items with regards to the variables under investigation. Based on the expert's comments, some modifications were made to ensure the validity of the instrument. The other instrument which was used the Bakare Progressive Matrices (BPM) had already been validated for face and content validity.

The reliability of Psychological Variables Assessment Scale (PVAS) was determined through Cronbach Alpha method for a measure of its internal consistency. Forty (40) respondents that were not used for the final study were used in calculating the reliability of the instrument. Copies of the instrument were administered to the sample with request from the researcher that subjects should respond to all the items of the instrument as honestly as possible.

Thereafter, the scores obtained were subjected to Cronbach alpha technique for each section of part II of the PVAS as well as for the entire instrument. For the fact that the instrument was a compound one that is a multi-variable instrument with its various variables organized in sections, there was the need to determine the reliability for each variable (section) as well as for the entire instrument. Consequently, the reliability coefficients for the various variables of part II of the PVAS was determined. The derived values which ranged from .51 to .74 were considered high enough to justify the use of the instrument for the study.

The instrument Psychological Variables Assessment Scale (PVAS) was administered to the sample of 240 underachieving students in 30 selected secondary schools in the three senatorial districts in Rivers State. Direct delivery method was employed by the researchers. The research questions were answered with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) in order to determine whether there was any relationship between academic underachievement and the individuals' variables such as self-esteem and locus of control. To determine the significance of r in each case of the research question, special Z, was used to test the hypotheses.



**Data Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement?

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement.

**Table 4.1: Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Underachievement**

Variables	N	$r_{cal}$	Zr	Zcrit	Decision
Self-esteem	240	0.08	1.24	1.96	NS
Underachievement	240				

NS = Not Significant

Table 4.1 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.08. This value indicates a very low relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement. When the r-value of 0.08 was subjected to special Z for significance, the Zr value of 1.24 was found to be less than Zcrit of 1.96, thus not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted. The result was that there is no significant relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between internal locus of control and academic underachievement?

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant relationship between internal locus of control and academic underachievement.

**Table 4.2: Relationship between Internal Locus of Control and Academic Underachievement**

Variables	N	$r_{cal}$	Zr	Zcrit	Decision
Internal locus of control	240	0.05	0.77	1.96	NS
Underachievement	240				

NS = Not Significant

Table 4.2 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.05. This value indicates a very low relationship between students' internal locus of control and academic underachievement. When the r-value of 0.05 was subjected to special Z for significance, the Zr value of 0.77 was found not to be significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted. This implies that there was no significant relationship between students' internal locus of control and academic underachievement.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between external locus of control and academic underachievement?

**Hypothesis 3:** There is no significant relationship between external locus of control and academic underachievement.

**Table 4.3: Relationship between External Locus of Control and Academic Underachievement**

Variables	N	$r_{cal}$	Zr	Zcrit	Decision
Internal locus of control	240	0.05	0.77	1.96	NS
Underachievement	240				

NS = Not Significant

Table 4.3 shows a correlation coefficient of 0.05. This value indicates a very low relationship between students' external locus of control and academic underachievement. When the r-value of 0.05 was subjected to special Z for significance, the Zr value of 0.77 was found not to be significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is hereby accepted. This implies that there was no significant relationship between students' external locus of control and academic underachievement.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The discussions of the findings of the study are presented along the lines of the specific objectives of the study. To this end the following sub-headings were used to guide the discussions:

- i) Relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement.
- ii) Relationship between internal locus of control and academic underachievement.
- iii) Relationship between external locus of control and academic underachievement.

### **Relationship between Self-Esteem and Academic Underachievement**

In this subsection of the discussion, the relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement of the adolescents' students was sought. The result indicated that there was a very low but positive relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement and this relationship was not statistically significant at 0.05 level of significance for a two-tailed test. The positive relationship between self-esteem and academic underachievement among adolescents' students means that as scores on self-esteem increases or decreases there is corresponding increase or decrease in students' academic underachievement. This means that those students, whose scores are high on self-esteem, are also high on their academic underachievement and vice-versa.

The present finding is corroborates with that of McLaughlin (2013) who reported that students' self-esteem do not significantly correlate with their academic achievement. Others include those of Abdullahi (2017). However, findings disconcertant with the present one were found by Troncone, Drammis and Labella (2014); Filippello, Sorrenti, Larcana and Rizzo (2013); Nwankwo, Balogun, Chkwudi and Ibeme (2012); Obochi (2011); and Pullmann and Allik (2008). These works separately and independently, found out that there is significant relationship between self-esteem and students' academic achievement at various level of achievement including underachievers.

### **Relationship between internal locus of control and academic underachievement**

The findings here revealed that there was a very low but positive and not significant relationship between students' internal locus of control and academic underachievement. The positive relationship between internal locus of control and academic underachievement among adolescents' students means that as scores on internal locus of control increases there is corresponding increase in students' academic underachievement and vice-versa. This means that those students, whose scores are high on internal locus of control, that is attributing their success or failure to themselves, are also high on their academic underachievement and vice-versa.

The present finding is in disagreement with those of Hasan and Khalid (2014); Adu and Oshati (2014); Uwazurike (2008) and Moore (2006) who in their separate but similar works found significant relationship between internal locus of control and students' academic achievement and underachievement. The researcher was not able to find research findings that are in agreement with the present one.

### **Relationship between external locus of control and academic underachievement**

The result here showed that students' external locus of control and academic underachievement also showed a very low relationship that was also not significant statistically. The positive relationship between external locus of control and academic underachievement among adolescents' students means that as scores on external locus of control increases there is corresponding increase in students' academic underachievement and vice-versa. This means that those students, whose scores are high on external locus of control, that is attributing their success or failure to external sources such as teachers, parents peer groups and the society in general, are also high on their academic underachievement and vice-versa.

The findings of the present study is in disagreement with those of Kaur (2016); Thangal, Joshi and Rajaguru (2016); Adu and Oshati (2014); Uwazurike (2008) who in their separate but

similar works found significant relationship between external locus of control and students' academic achievement and underachievement. The researcher was not able to find research findings that are in agreement with the present one.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the major findings of the study it could be logically concluded that self-esteem, internal locus of control and external locus of control were not found to be significantly related to students' academic underachievement. Nonetheless, the academic performance of underachievers is an on-going concern and it is critical to continue to study the relationship between underachievers, academic achievement and other variables hopefully, researchers, teachers, parents and significant others will understand fully and intervene successfully where necessary.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Academic underachievement is one issue that may continue to associate with secondary school adolescents and so, teachers, counsellors as well as parents should set achievable goals for students and channel their energies towards achieving these goals, thereby reducing the menace.
2. Even though all the independent variables discussed in this study are positively but very lowly related to academic underachievement, teachers and counselors should identify students having such problems and try to proffer solutions to these problems.
3. Ability test should be conducted from time to time to identify students that have academic problems.

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