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Self-concept and level of educational aspiration among adolescents

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to understand if self-concept has an impact on the level of educational aspiration of adolescents.

Methods: The study was conducted in the Government and Private schools of a city in India. 300 adolescents in the age group of 13-18 years were selected and sampled according to the random sampling technique. Out of the total 300, 150 students were selected from Government schools and 150 from Private schools. The number was further divided on the basis of their gender i.e. 75 girls and 75 boys. Two tools, Self-concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and the Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) were used to carry out the study. Mean, standard deviation, chi-square and fisher exact test were used for the statistical analysis of the data.

Results: The major finding of the study was that the self-concept of adolescents had an effect on their level of educational aspiration. Other findings showed that there was only a slight difference in the self-concept and level of educational aspiration between adolescents studying in Government schools and those studying in Private schools. It also showed that mostly, girls have a better self-concept and level of educational aspiration than the boys.

Conclusions: The study proved that there is no association between the self-concept and level of educational aspiration among adolescents in the age group of 13-15 years and 16-18 years.

Keywords: adolescent, rural, urban, habits, attitudes, education

Introduction

“Within our dreams and aspirations, we find our possibilities.” – Sugar Ray Leonard

Aspiration is nothing but a strong desire to achieve something high or great in life. It is a longing to meet goals, targets or aims that one has set for oneself or to fulfil dreams that one has wished for. ‘Self-concept’ is a combination of two distinct words; self, meaning the person or individual and concept, meaning who or what they think they are. Self-concept answers the most basic question – “Who am I?” To be aware of oneself is to have a concept about oneself. In simple terms, it is what one thinks about oneself, how they perceive and evaluate themselves. Self-concept is generally thought of as our individual perceptions of our behaviour, abilities, and unique characteristics. It is essentially a mental picture of who you are as a person. It is nothing but a belief that an individual holds about himself or herself in relation to his physical, emotional, social, psychological and spiritual being. An adolescent is a person lying in the age group of 12 to 19 years. Adolescents, also known as young, youthful, pubescent, teens, teenage, teenaged, minors and juveniles are people who are in the process of coming out of childhood and entering into adulthood, commonly known as the “transitional period”. The present study titled “Self-concept and level of educational aspiration among adolescents” was taken up in order to assess the self-concept and level of educational aspiration among adolescents. The uniqueness of the study lies in the fact that it is a comparison between self-concept and level of educational aspiration of the adolescents belonging to the lower socioeconomic status with those belonging to the middle socioeconomic status. The findings of the study may be used to design workshop modules for adolescents in order to improve their self-concept or by career or educational counsellors to plan programmes for educational guidance in schools. The study also paves way for future researchers to dwell more on the relationship between self-concept and the level of educational aspiration and the implications that the two may have on the academic achievements of the

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adolescent students. The research was conducted with a broad objective of studying the effect of self-concept on the level of educational aspiration among adolescent students. The researcher took up this study as adolescence is a period of marked physical and psychological changes, hence it was interesting to know how and what these teenagers feel about themselves and how this perception influences the different aspects of their lives. Also, to know and understand the various factors that influence and shape an adolescent's self-concept and to understand the important factors that lead or do not lead to the formation of educational or academic aspirations, their particular implications on an adolescent's present and later life.

Methods

The study was conducted in Government and Private schools in India. 300 adolescents in the age group of 13-18 years, were selected and sampled according to the random sampling technique. Out of the total 300, 150 students were selected from Government schools and 150 from Private schools. The number was further divided on the basis of their gender i.e. 75 girls and 75 boys. Two tools, Self-concept Questionnaire (SCQ) and the Level of Educational Aspiration Test (LEAT) were used to carry out the study. The SCQ is a standardized tool that was designed and developed by Dr. Raj Kumar Saraswat in the year 1992. The questionnaire aims to elicit information regarding adolescent's perceptions and characteristics. The self-concept inventory provides six separate dimensions of self-concept, i.e. physical, social, intellectual, moral, educational and temperamental self-concept. It also gives a total self-concept score. The inventory contains 48 items. Each dimension contains 8 items. Each

item is provided with 5 alternatives. The scoring method remains constant for all items. The order of scoring is 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. The LEAT was developed by Dr. Yasmin Ghani Khan in the year 1999 in order to measure the level of educational aspiration which in turn helps in predicting the type of aspiration. The study was a comparative, two-group, clinical study. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was carried out. Mean, standard deviation, chi-square and fisher exact test were used for the statistical analysis of the data.

This study is exempted by the ethics panel of my institution

Results

The results of the study were as follows:

Association of self-concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescent boys and girls studying in government schools

Table 1 shows that in group I (Government schools), 1.3% boys had an average level of self-concept, 39.3% had above average and 9.3% had a high level of self-concept. Whereas, 0% (none) girls had an average level of self-concept, 37.3% had above average and 12.7% had a high level of self-concept. The total percentage of adolescents having an average level of self-concept were 0.7%, above average were 38.3% while 11% of all the adolescents had a high level of self-concept. It also shows that there was no significant association between the self-concept of boys and girls in the group.

Table 1 Association of self-concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescent boys and girls studying in government schools

Group I	Gender		Total (n = 150)	P value
	Boys (n = 75)	Girls (n = 75)		
Self-Concept Level				
▪ Average	2 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (0.7%)	0.271
▪ Above Average	59 (39.3%)	56 (37.3%)	115 (38.3%)	
▪ High	14 (9.3%)	19 (12.7%)	33 (11%)	
Level of educational aspiration				
▪ Low	8 (5.3%)	0 (0%)	8 (2.7%)	<0.001**
▪ Average	48 (32%)	31 (20.7%)	79 (26.3%)	
▪ High	19 (12.7%)	44 (29.3%)	63 (21%)	

In the level of educational aspiration, 5.3% of the boys had a low level, 32% of them had an average level and 12.7% had a high level of educational aspiration.

On the other hand, 0% (none) girls had a low level, 20.7% had an average level and 29.3% girls had a high level of educational aspiration. Amongst all the adolescent girls and boys in the group, 2.7% had a low level of educational aspiration while 26.3% had an average and 21% of them had a high level of educational aspiration.

The table also shows that there was no association between the self-concept levels of the girls and boys. However, a strongly significant association was present in their levels of educational aspiration.

Association of self-concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescent boys and girls studying in private schools

Table 2 shows that in group II (Private schools), 4% of the adolescent boys had an average self-concept, and 40.7% had above average level of self-concept while 5.3% of them had a high level of self-concept. Amongst the girls, 0.7% had an average level, 30.7% had an above average level and 18.7% of them had a high level of self-concept. In total, the percentage of adolescent boys and girls having an average self-concept was 2.3%, 35.7% had an above average level while 12% of them had a high level of self-concept. The table even shows that there was a strongly significant association in the levels of self-concept of the girls and boys in this group.

Table 2: Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescent boys and girls studying in private schools

Group II	Gender		Total (n = 150)	P value
	Boys (n = 75)	Girls (n = 75)		
Self-Concept Level				
▪ Average	6 (4%)	1 (0.7%)	7 (2.3%)	<0.001**
▪ Above Average	61 (40.7%)	46 (30.7%)	107 (35.7%)	
▪ High	8 (5.3%)	28 (18.7%)	36 (12%)	
Level of educational aspiration				
▪ Low	5 (3.3%)	1 (0.7%)	6 (2%)	0.065+
▪ Average	33 (22%)	46 (30.7%)	79 (26.3%)	
▪ High	37 (24.7%)	28 (18.7%)	65 (21.7%)	

For the level of educational aspiration, 3.3% boys had a low level, 22% of them had an average level while 24.7% had a high level of educational aspiration. Amongst the girls, only 0.7% had a low level of educational aspiration, 30.7% had an average level and 18.7% had a high level of educational aspiration. Overall, 2% of the adolescent boys and girls had a low level, 26.3% had average and 21.7% had a high level of educational aspiration. It is seen that there was a strongly significant association in the self-concept levels between the boys and girls of the group but only a slight association in the levels of educational aspiration between the two.

Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescents studying in government schools and adolescents studying in private schools

In table 3 and figures 1 (A) and (B) it can be seen that amongst those studying in Government schools, 12.5%

adolescents had an average level of self–concept but a low level of educational aspiration, 1.3% of them had an average level of self–concept and educational aspiration, both and 0% (none) had an average level of self–concept but a high level of educational aspiration. It is also evident that 25% of these adolescents had an above average level of self–concept but a low level of educational aspiration, 91.9% had an above average self-concept level and an average level of educational aspiration while 65.1% of the adolescents had an above average self–concept level and a high level of educational aspiration. 62.5% adolescents had a high level of self–concept but a low level of educational aspiration, only 7.6% of the adolescents had a high level of self–concept and an average level of educational aspiration while 34.9% of them had high level of both, self–concept and educational aspiration. The table shows a strong significance in the association between the levels of self–concept and the levels of educational aspiration of the adolescents studying in Government schools.

Table 3: Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescents studying in government schools and adolescents studying in private schools

Self Concept Level	Level of educational aspiration			Total (n = 150)	P value
	Low	Average	High		
Government					
▪ Average	1 (12.5%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.3%)	<0.001**
▪ Above Average	2 (25%)	72 (91.1%)	41 (65.1%)	115 (76.7%)	
▪ High	5 (62.5%)	6 (7.6%)	22 (34.9%)	33 (22%)	
▪ Total	8 (100%)	79 (100%)	63 (100%)	150 (100%)	
Private					
▪ Average	1 (16.7%)	5 (6.3%)	1 (1.5%)	7 (4.7%)	0.025*
▪ Above Average	5 (83.3%)	49 (62%)	53 (81.5%)	107 (71.3%)	
▪ High	0 (0%)	25 (31.6%)	11 (16.9%)	36 (24%)	
▪ Total	6 (100%)	79 (100%)	65 (100%)	150 (100%)	

Amongst adolescents studying in Private schools, 16.7% adolescents had an average level of self–concept but a low level of educational aspiration, 6.3% had an average level of both, self–concept and educational aspiration while only 1.5% of them had an average self-concept but a high level of educational aspiration. It is also visible that 83.3% adolescents who had an above average level of self–concept had a low level of educational aspiration, 62% of those who had an above average self–concept had an average level of

educational aspiration and 81.5% adolescents with an above average level of self–concept had a high level of educational aspiration. With adolescents having a high level of self–concept, 0% (none) had a low level of educational aspiration, 31.6% had an average level and 16.9% had a high level of educational aspiration. The table shows a moderately significant association between the level of educational aspiration and the levels of self–concept amongst the students studying in private schools.

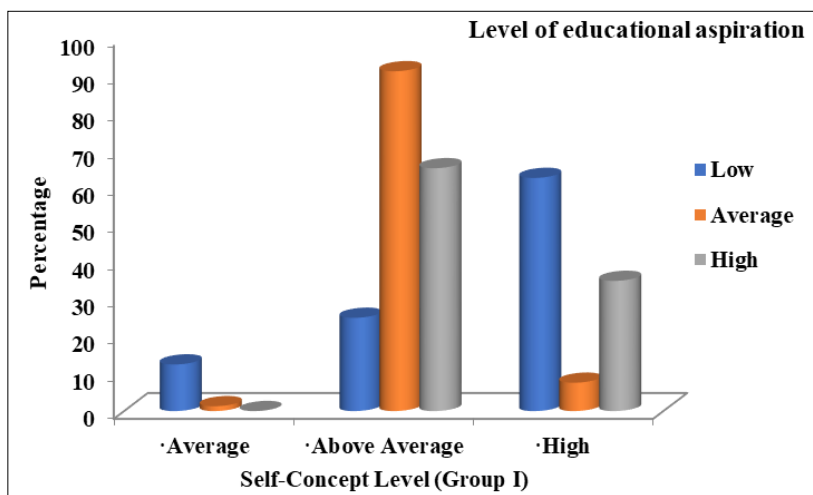


Fig 1(A): Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescents studying in government schools and adolescents studying in private schools

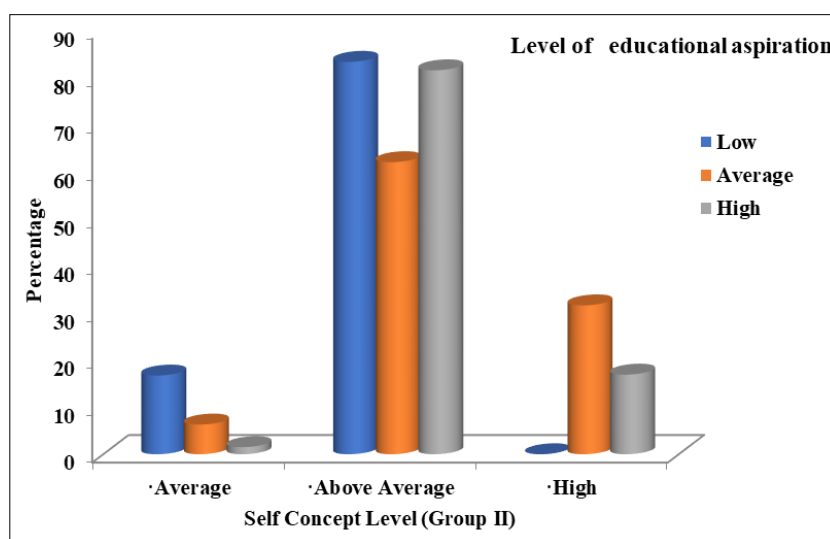


Fig 1(B): Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration between adolescents studying in government schools and adolescents studying in private schools

Apostal *et al.* (1991) [1] has revealed the particular vulnerability of the rural youth through their studies which are similar to the present findings. He proved that the adolescents coming from rural backgrounds tend to be more isolated and suffer from social and cultural deprivation as compared to the urban adolescents. They are also less exposed to recreational, educational and several other resources. As compared to the urban settings there is more isolation and poverty which may result in lowered self Concept and self Confidence

Robinson *et al.* (2003) also examined that for low socioeconomic students, the school’s influence, goals, minority, academic achievement, and psychological well-being is more significant than friends, family or increasing educational aspirations.

Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration of adolescents between 13-15 years and adolescents between 16-18 years

Table 4: Association of self–concept levels with levels of educational aspiration of adolescents between 13-15 years and adolescents between 16-18 years

Self Concept Level	Level of educational aspiration			Total (n=150)	P value
	Low	Average	High		
13 - 15 years					
▪ Average	1 (16.7%)	3 (5.9%)	1 (1.8%)	5 (4.4%)	0.147
▪ Above Average	3 (50%)	41 (80.4%)	42 (75%)	86 (76.1%)	
▪ High	2 (33.3%)	7 (13.7%)	13 (23.2%)	22 (19.5%)	
▪ Total	6 (100%)	51 (100%)	56 (100%)	113 (100%)	
16 - 18 years					
▪ Average	1 (12.5%)	3 (2.8%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.1%)	0.115
▪ Above Average	4 (50%)	80 (74.8%)	52 (72.2%)	136 (72.7%)	
▪ High	3 (37.5%)	24 (22.4%)	20 (27.8%)	47 (25.1%)	
▪ Total	8 (100%)	107 (100%)	72 (100%)	187 (100%)	

Table 4 and figures 2 (A) and (B) show that in the age group of 13 to 15 years, 16.7% adolescents had an average self-concept level but a low level of educational aspiration. 5.9% of those who had average self-concept level had an average level of educational aspiration as well while only 1.8% had an average self-concept level but a high level of educational aspiration. 50% of the adolescents in this age group had an above average level of self-concept but a low level of educational aspiration while 80.4% of them had an above average self-concept level and an average level of educational aspiration. 75% of those who had an above average self-concept level had a high level of educational aspiration. For adolescents who had a high level of self-concept, 33.3% had a low level of educational aspiration, 13.7% had average and 23.2% had a high level of educational aspiration. In the age

group of 16 to 18 years, 12.5% adolescents with an average level of self-concept had a low level of educational aspiration, 2.8% had average while 0% (none) had high. Out of those who had an above average level of self-concept, 50% adolescents had a low level of educational aspiration, 74.8% had average and 72.2% had a high level of educational aspiration. 37.5% adolescents in this age group had a high level of self-concept but a low level of educational aspiration, 22.4% had a high self-concept level and an average level of educational aspiration while 27.8% had a high level of both, self-concept and educational aspiration. It is seen that there was no significant association between the self-concept levels and the levels of educational aspiration of the adolescents in the respective age groups.

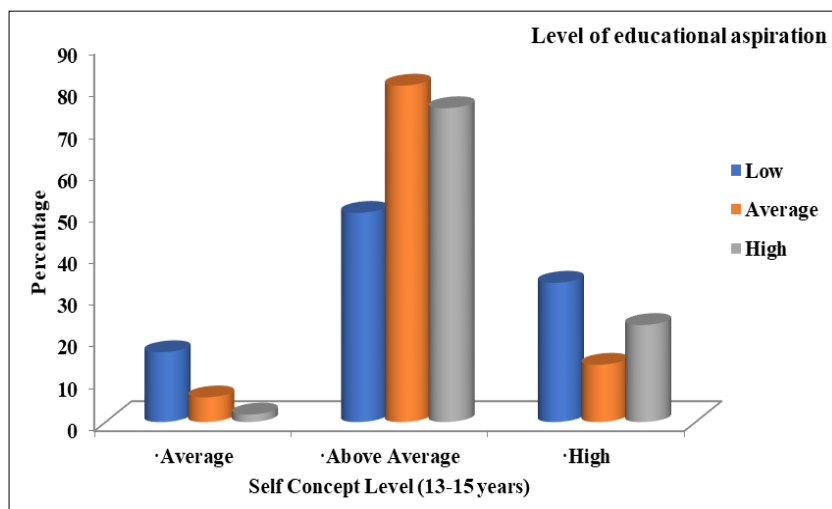


Fig 2(A): Association of self-concept levels with levels of educational aspiration of adolescents between 13-15 years and adolescents between 16-18 years

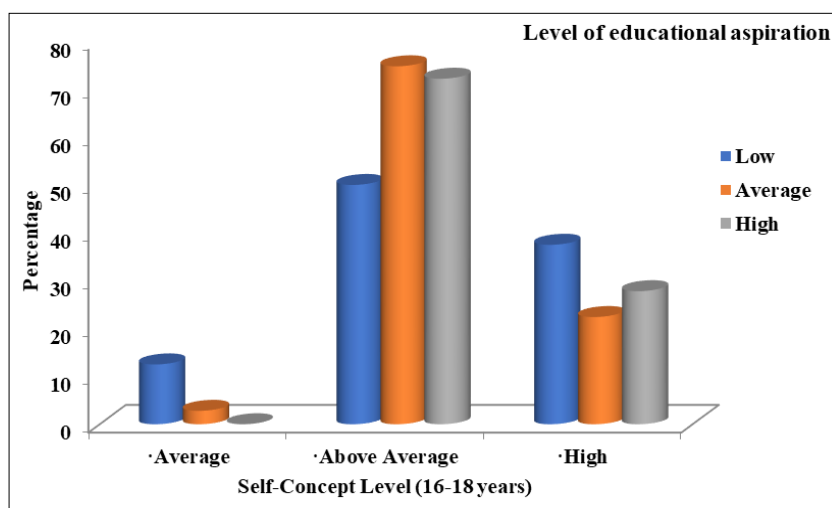


Fig 2(B): Association of self-concept levels with levels of educational aspiration of adolescents between 13-15 years and adolescents between 16-18 years

Co-relation between the areas of the self-concept questionnaire

Table 5 shows that amongst the different areas of self-concept, all six areas i.e. physical, social, temperamental,

educational, moral and intellectual had a strongly significant co-relation with the self-concept of the adolescents. That is, all these aspects had an influence on or affect the self-concept of the subjects.

Table 5: Co-relation between the areas of the self-concept questionnaire

	Group I		Group II		Total	
	r value	P value	r value	P value	r value	P value
Self concept score vs. Physical (A)	0.606	<0.001**	0.776	<0.001**	0.717	<0.001**
Self concept score vs. Social (B)	0.768	<0.001**	0.818	<0.001**	0.798	<0.001**
Self concept score vs. Temperamental (C)	0.708	<0.001**	0.767	<0.001**	0.736	<0.001**
Self concept score vs. Educational (D)	0.736	<0.001**	0.827	<0.001**	0.791	<0.001**
Self concept score vs. Moral (E)	0.508	<0.001**	0.354	<0.001**	0.415	<0.001**
Self concept score vs. Intellectual (F)	0.297	<0.001**	0.233	0.004**	0.253	<0.001**

It is evident that the physical appearance, strength, body type etc. influence the kind of self-concept that the adolescents develop. It also shows that the social skills, social life, and the ability or inability to socialize properly creates an impact on the self-concept of adolescents. The nature or the kind of temperament that an adolescent individual holds tends to influence their self-concept. In the educational aspect, the educational achievements, aspirations, grades, school performance, co-curricular activities of the adolescents altogether have an effect on the kind of self-concept that they develop. Also, their level of intellect or intelligence and

common sense about things influences their self-concept.

Co-relation between the areas of the level of educational aspiration test

Table 6 shows that all three areas of the level of educational aspiration test had a strongly significant co-relation with the level of educational aspiration of adolescents. This means that the family's support, pupil's own views and efforts towards education and the reality of the aspired goals, together have an impact on the subjects' level of educational aspiration.

Table 6: Co-relation between the areas of the level of educational aspiration test

	Group I		Group II		Total	
	r value	P value	r value	P value	r value	P value
Level of educational aspiration vs. II	0.830	<0.001**	0.715	<0.001**	0.781	<0.001**
Level of educational aspiration vs. III	0.822	<0.001**	0.787	<0.001**	0.802	<0.001**
Level of educational aspiration vs. IV	0.744	<0.001**	0.689	<0.001**	0.711	<0.001**

Garg *et al.* (2002) performed a study which shows the effect of family influence on the adolescent's level of educational aspiration, the results of which are particularly consistent with the present finding. They showed that the impact of family factors had their influence on shaping student's educational aspirations through their impact on attitudes, extra-curricular activities, homework, school and perceptions of students of

their parents' educational aspirations.

Macbrayne (1987) ^[4] also proved that children's own aspirations are influenced by their parents' aspirations or expectations from them.

Overall co-relation between self-concept and level of educational aspiration

Table 7: Overall co-relation between self-concept and level of educational aspiration

	Group I		Group II		Total	
	r value	P value	r value	P value	r value	P value
Self-concept vs. Level of educational aspiration	0.309	<0.001**	0.105	0.202	0.194	<0.001**

Table 7 shows that amongst adolescents studying in Government schools and those studying in Private schools, both had a strongly significant co-relation between the self-concept and level of educational aspiration. This means that over all, there was a strong impact of the self-concept of the adolescents on their level of educational aspiration.

Chapman *et al.* (2000) ^[2] carried out an investigation which also proves the relationship between an adolescent's self-concept and level of educational aspiration. They showed in a longitudinal study that when students develop a negative academic self-concept, their academic skills suffer. Specifically, they found that students with a negative academic self-concept had poorer phonological sensitivity skills and read at lower reading levels than children with typical academic self-concepts.

Shavelson *et al.* (1976) ^[6] also conducted a study which proved that when adolescents have a strong self-concept, they are able to better position themselves for learning, and this in turn can facilitate a strong academic self-concept, leading to high levels of educational aspirations.

Conclusion

It was concluded from the present study "Self-concept and

level of educational aspiration among adolescents" that during the period of adolescence, self-concept of individuals does have a major impact on their level of educational aspiration. The kind of self-concept that the individuals develop during adolescence has its root in their childhood. During childhood, the factors that form a basis for a good and positive self-concept in the later years of the individual's life are the kind of bond that the child has with the parents, the kind of parenting that the child receives, the home and school environment and the opportunities they get in their life. Hence, a healthy relationship with the parents, mutual understanding and acceptance by the parents, inclusion in the peer group, approvals, recognition, appreciation and acknowledgement during adolescence are factors that further strengthen the self-concept of the individual and help him or her to not only aspire or set goals but, to also work towards achieving them. It helps the adolescents to be more driven in terms of their education and vocation, take the necessary measures in order to realise their aims and eventually become successful individuals. This is not just limited to their education but, it also helps in other spheres of their lives, promoting optimum psychological, social, mental and physical growth and development. Hence, it can be correctly

said that a positive notion of the self or a positive self-concept during adolescence will direct the individual towards having educational aspirations, encouraging them to perform well at school and later in life. On the other hand, a negative self-concept will inhibit the adolescents from setting goals and achieving educational excellence in life.

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