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Examining the Influence of Locus of Control and Self-Esteem on Depression among Secondary School Adolescents in Karu Local Government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in, Karu Local Government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The total population for the study consisted of 315 students, from which a sample was drawn to examine how psychological factors predict depressive symptoms during adolescence. Three major constructs were measured using standardized instruments: The locus of control scale, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, and the depression inventory for adolescents. These instruments were selected due to their reliability, ease of administration, and relevance to adolescent psychological assessment. The study adopted a survey design using simple linear and multiple regression analysis to determine the independent and combined influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression. Findings from the regression analysis of hypothesis one revealed that internal locus of control significantly and negatively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = -0.31$, $t = -5.50$, $p < .05$), This indicates that an increase in internal locus of control was associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms among adolescents. In contrast, external locus of control was found to have a significant positive influence on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 6.49$, $p < .05$). The regression analysis of hypothesis two revealed that low self-esteem significantly and positively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = 0.39$, $t = 6.86$, $p < .05$), These findings underscore the need for school-based psychological interventions that strengthen students' internal control beliefs and self-esteem to enhance emotional resilience. The study contributes important empirical evidence to

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adolescent mental health research in Nigeria and provides a foundation for further investigations and interventions.

Keywords: locus of control ,self-esteem and depression

Introduction

Depression has emerged as one of the most prevalent and debilitating psychological disorders affecting adolescents globally. Among secondary school students, depression is increasingly recognized as a critical public health and educational concern, given its profound impact on emotional development, academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and overall mental health functioning. Adolescents in secondary schools often navigate a complex interplay of psychological, academic, social, and identity-related challenges that can predispose them to emotional instability. Depression, in this context, is not merely a transient mood fluctuation but a clinical condition characterized by persistent sadness, loss of interest, fatigue, cognitive distortions, and in some cases, suicidal ideation (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR), depression, or Major Depressive Disorder (MDD), involves a constellation of affective, behavioral, and cognitive symptoms, including depressed mood, anhedonia, feelings of worthlessness, impaired concentration, and recurrent thoughts of death, sustained for at least two weeks (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). In

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adolescents, the manifestation of depression may differ from adults; for example, irritability may be more pronounced than sadness, and symptoms may present as school refusal, aggression, social withdrawal, or somatic complaints. These symptoms often go unrecognized in school settings, especially in contexts where mental health literacy is low and psychological services are underdeveloped (Oluwatosin & Chukwudi, 2024). If untreated, adolescent depression may lead to poor academic performance, substance abuse, self-harm, and long-term psychological dysfunction extending into adulthood.

Depression in adolescence is often shaped by a multi-factorial etiology involving genetic predisposition, neurobiological changes, environmental stressors, family dysfunction, peer pressure, and intrapersonal variables such as self-esteem, locus of control, and coping style. The school environment, particularly during the secondary education phase, becomes a significant psychosocial arena where these factors intersect. Academic failure, bullying, teacher criticism and social exclusion can act as potent triggers of depressive symptoms, especially among students with low emotional regulation or maladaptive attributional styles (Mensah & Adusei, 2024).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), depression is one of the leading causes of illness and disability among adolescents globally, with approximately 13% to 20% of adolescents experiencing a mental health disorder, most commonly depression. Globally,

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depressive symptoms among adolescents often present as sadness, irritability, fatigue, academic withdrawal, and in some cases, suicidal ideation. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2024) reported that in the United States, 29.3% of adolescents experienced persistent feelings of sadness and hopelessness in the past year, while 14.7% had made a suicide plan. This rising trend has been attributed to factors such as academic pressure, social media exposure, bullying, family breakdown, and socioeconomic hardship.

Self-esteem, defined as one's subjective evaluation of personal worth, is another critical predictor of adolescent mental health. Low self-esteem has been strongly associated with cognitive distortions, emotional instability, and poor coping strategies, which increase the risk of depression. In a study of 1,500 adolescents in Ibadan, Chen and Dada (2022) found that students with low self-esteem were 2.6 times more likely to experience depressive symptoms than those with high self-esteem. Furthermore, when low self-esteem is combined with an external locus of control, the risk of depression intensifies due to diminished agency and negative self-concept. Ogunleye and Chukwu (2023) reported that adolescents with both low self-esteem and external locus of control had the highest depression scores in their study of 1,200 Nigerian youths, demonstrating a significant interaction effect between these two variables.

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Given this gap, the present study seeks to examine the individual and joint influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Depression is a significant and growing psychological disorder among adolescents, with widespread implications for their academic achievement, emotional development, and long-term wellbeing. Globally, depression affects approximately 13% to 20% of adolescents (WHO, 2023), and it has been linked to school dropout, substance abuse, social withdrawal, and even suicide. In Nigeria, the situation is equally alarming. A national survey by Akinola and Okonkwo (2023) reported that 21.8% of secondary school students experience moderate to severe depressive symptoms, while Uzochukwu and Bala (2022) found 17.4% prevalence, with girls being disproportionately affected. Despite growing concern, the internal cognitive mechanisms contributing to adolescent depression such as locus of control and self-esteem remain underexplored, particularly within sub-Saharan Africa.

Locus of control, a personality dimension developed by Rotter (1966), significantly influences how adolescents perceive and respond to life events. Adolescents with an external locus of control believe that outcomes in their lives are governed by fate, chance, or the actions of

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others, which fosters feelings of helplessness and hopelessness key precursors of depression. Mburu and Omondi (2023) found that Kenyan adolescents with external control beliefs were 31% more likely to exhibit depressive symptoms than those with internal control beliefs. In contrast, an internal locus of control is linked with personal agency and adaptive coping strategies, which help mitigate emotional distress. However, many Nigerian adolescents are raised in environments that reinforce external attributions, such as strict parental control, rigid school systems, and spiritual explanations of misfortune, which may reinforce depressive tendencies. Self-esteem, on the other hand, represents the individual's overall evaluation of their worth and capabilities. Adolescents with low self-esteem often experience self-doubt, social withdrawal, and heightened sensitivity to criticism, all of which are predictive of depressive symptomatology. In a study involving 1,500 adolescents in southwestern Nigeria, Chen and Dada (2022) reported that those with low self-esteem were 2.6 times more likely to suffer from depression. Conversely, adolescents with high self-esteem tend to display confidence, emotional stability, and greater psychological resilience.

Therefore, this study seeks to bridge this gap by critically examining the influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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1. 3 Research Questions

The research answered the following questions:

1. What is the influence of locus of control on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

1.4 Objectives of Study

This study achieved the following objectives:

1. To examine the influence of locus of control on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
2. To examine the influence of self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated for the study;

1. There will be a significant influence of locus of control on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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2. There will be a significant influence of self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
3. There will be a significant interactive influence of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for several reasons:

It provides empirical insights into how cognitive-personality variables, locus of control and self-esteem contribute to depression in adolescents. This understanding is critical for developing early screening tools and cognitive-behavioral strategies tailored to youth in educational and clinical settings.

The findings will inform school-based mental health interventions. Educators can better identify at-risk students and implement programs that foster internal control beliefs and self-worth, thereby reducing depressive symptoms and improving academic engagement.

The study offers evidence that can guide national and local policies aimed at integrating adolescent mental health into educational and health systems, especially in Nigeria where such services are limited or absent.

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Scope of the Study

This study is limited to investigating the influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The focus is on students within the age range of 12 to 19 years, who are enrolled in public and private secondary schools. The geographical scope is limited to selected schools in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria, which are representative of both urban and semi-urban populations. The study utilized standardized psychological instruments to measure locus of control, self-esteem, and depression.

Conceptual Clarification/Literature review

This section presents the conceptual definitions of key variables in the study and critically reviews related empirical literature to provide a theoretical and research-based foundation for understanding the relationship between of personality traits, prison environment and Prison Adjustment

Locus of Control and Depression

The relationship between locus of control and depression among adolescents has been a focus of psychological inquiry, particularly in educational settings where students' perceptions of control over life events influence their emotional adjustment. Numerous empirical studies across African contexts have examined how locus of control

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orientation whether internal or external can significantly predict depressive symptoms among secondary school students.

Okonkwo and Eze (2023) conducted a study in Enugu State, Nigeria, using a correlational survey design to explore how locus of control relates to depression among secondary school students. The study involved 420 adolescents aged 13 to 18, selected through stratified random sampling from six public schools. The findings revealed a significant negative correlation ($r = -0.61$, $p < 0.01$) between internal locus of control and depression. Students who perceived themselves as having control over their lives experienced fewer depressive symptoms, whereas those with an external orientation showed elevated depression scores. The researchers recommended implementing cognitive-behavioral strategies in school counseling to enhance students' internal control beliefs and reduce vulnerability to emotional disturbances.

Similarly, Ibrahim and Yusuf (2022) carried out a quantitative cross-sectional study in Accra, Ghana, focusing on the association between locus of control and depressive tendencies among adolescents. Using cluster sampling, the researcher's selected 350 students aged 14 to 19 from urban and rural schools. The results indicated that students with an external locus of control were more likely to experience moderate to severe depression ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.01$). These findings underscore the psychological cost of externalized control beliefs and suggest the need

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for school-based mental health education programs that promote internal attributions, self-responsibility, and emotional resilience.

In a related Nigerian study, Adetunji and Bello (2024) examined 500 secondary school students in Lagos through a descriptive survey design and simple random sampling technique. The researchers reported a statistically significant inverse relationship ($r = -0.53$, $p < 0.01$) between internal locus of control and depression. Adolescents who viewed themselves as having personal agency were less likely to report depressive symptoms. Based on their findings, the authors emphasized the role of school psychologists in helping students build internal control and recommended mentorship programs as an intervention to mitigate depressive tendencies among youth.

Moyo and Ncube (2022) extended this line of research to Zimbabwe, studying 300 secondary school students in Harare using a correlational design and purposive sampling from public and private schools. The study revealed that students with an internal locus of control had significantly lower depression scores ($M = 12.4$) than those with an external locus ($M = 23.8$), with a p-value less than 0.001. These results further solidified the negative association between external locus of control and adolescent mental health. The researchers recommended regular psychoeducational workshops that would help students

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understand the importance of internal attributions and develop effective coping mechanisms for academic and social stressors.

In northern Nigeria, Abubakar and Sani (2025) employed a mixed-methods approach to assess the influence of locus of control on depression among 400 adolescents in Kano State. A multistage sampling technique was used to ensure representation from both urban and rural schools. Quantitative data analysis showed a moderate inverse relationship ($r = -0.47$, $p < 0.05$) between internal control and depression, while qualitative findings revealed that students who attributed events to fate or luck felt helpless and despondent. The researchers recommended resilience training and the integration of emotional regulation modules into civic education curricula to foster adaptive control beliefs among adolescents.

Self-Esteem and Depression

Empirical investigations into the relationship between self-esteem and depression among secondary school adolescents have gained increasing attention in recent years, especially within sub-Saharan African contexts. Self-esteem, as a critical psychological variable, has been widely studied in its role as both a protective and risk factor for adolescent depression. This literature review highlights eight empirical studies that explore the nature, direction, and implications of the

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relationship between these two constructs among adolescent populations in secondary schools.

Okoro and Ibrahim (2022) conducted a correlational study in Lagos State, Nigeria, using a sample of 300 adolescents selected through stratified random sampling. Utilizing Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale and the Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II), the researchers found a statistically significant negative correlation between self-esteem and depression ($r = -0.62$, $p < 0.01$). Adolescents with low self-esteem were more prone to depressive symptoms. The researchers recommended the inclusion of self-esteem enhancement programs within the school counseling framework to mitigate depressive tendencies among adolescents.

Similarly, Mensah and Boateng (2023) examined the same relationship in Accra, Ghana, using a descriptive cross-sectional design with 250 participants sampled via multistage sampling. Their findings also indicated a strong inverse relationship between the two variables ($t = -4.35$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that adolescents with higher self-esteem had significantly lower levels of depression. The study emphasized the importance of implementing school-based psychoeducational programs focused on self-confidence and emotional resilience as preventive measures for depression.

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Chukwu and Nwachukwu (2023) adopted an ex post facto design in Enugu State, Nigeria, to assess the association between self-esteem and depression among 210 junior secondary students. Purposive sampling was used, and findings showed a moderate but meaningful negative correlation ($r = -0.54$), confirming the protective role of self-esteem. The researchers recommended that school psychologists employ cognitive-behavioral strategies to help students reconstruct negative self-beliefs and reduce depressive symptoms.

In Kenya, Abdullahi et al. (2024) conducted a quantitative study among 180 adolescents in Nairobi using simple random sampling. Their results revealed a negative beta coefficient ($\beta = -0.49$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that self-esteem was a significant predictor of depression. Furthermore, the study highlighted gender differences, with females displaying both lower self-esteem and higher depression scores. Based on this, the authors recommended gender-specific interventions to address the unique psychological needs of male and female adolescents.

In a related study, Adebayo and Fatima (2023) surveyed 280 public school adolescents in Kwara State, Nigeria, using cluster sampling. Their findings supported earlier studies, reporting a negative correlation between self-esteem and depression ($r = -0.60$). The study emphasized the integration of esteem-enhancing tasks in academic and

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extracurricular activities, such as debates and leadership roles, to improve students' emotional health and overall adjustment.

Methodology

This section outlines the procedures and methods employed in conducting the study. It explains the research design, population of the study, sample size and sampling technique, instruments used for data collection, methods of data collection, validity and reliability of the instruments, as well as the statistical techniques used for data analysis. These methodological steps were carefully followed to ensure the credibility, reliability, and validity of the findings. influence of locus of control and self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in, Karu Local Government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Population, Sample and Sampling Technique

The total population of this study comprised of one thousand, seven hundred and seventy eight (3,784) senior secondary school students (SS1–SS3) in government secondary school , Karu, Nasarawa state, Nigeria. Stratified sampling to ensure proportional representation of schools by gender (co-educational, all-boys, and all-girls schools).The sample size used for this study was determined mathematically using Z –Score formula

$$S= Z2 \times P \times (1-P)M2(1-P)M2$$

Where,

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- S = sample size for infinite population
- Z = Z score
- P = population proportion (Assumed as 50% or 0.5)
- M = Margin of error

Given: Z = 3,784, P = 0.5, M = 0.05

Using sample size formula,

S= Z2 × P × (1−P) M2 (1−*P*) *M*2

S= (3,784)2 × 0.5 × (1−0.5) 0.052(1−0.5)0.052

314 × 0.25 / 0.0025

S = 315.

Research Instrument

Three instruments were used in this study. These are:

Section A: Locus of Control Scale (LCS). The locus of control scale was developed by Rotter in 1966 to assess individual differences in the general expectation of control over reinforcement or life events. The scale consists of 29 forced-choice items, including 6 filler items that are not scored. Each item presents a pair of statements, and respondents must choose the one that best reflects their personal beliefs. The format is non-Likert, employing a binary forced-choice response, though

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modified versions exist using Likert-style responses. The original reliability of the scale was reported at α = 0.70–0.79 (Rotter, 1966). In Nigeria, Umeh (2022) revalidated the scale among adolescents in Lagos State, reporting a reliability coefficient of α = 0.76, confirming its internal consistency and cultural applicability among secondary school populations.

Section B: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). The scale was developed by Rosenberg in 1965 to measure global self-esteem, The RSES comprises 10 items five positively worded and five negatively worded designed to assess positive and negative feelings about the self. It uses a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree, producing a total score ranging from 10 to 40. Higher scores indicate higher self-esteem. The scale has demonstrated high internal reliability in numerous studies, with α = 0.83 in general adolescent samples. In Nigeria, Chukwu (2023) conducted a psychometric revalidation among senior secondary students and reported a reliability coefficient of α = 0.81, supporting its use in Nigerian educational contexts.

Section C: Beck Depression Inventory-II (BDI-II). The scale was developed by Beck et al., in 1996, as a revision of the original BDI. It was designed to measure the severity of depression symptoms consistent with DSM-IV diagnostic criteria (Beck et al., 1996). It is

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widely regarded as one of the most clinically and psychometrically robust instruments for identifying depressive symptoms in both clinical and non-clinical populations, including adolescents. The BDI-II consists of 21 items, each reflecting a symptom of depression (e.g., sadness, guilt, hopelessness, fatigue). Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3, depending on the severity of the symptom, with total scores ranging from 0 to 63. Score interpretations are typically categorized as follows: 0–13: Minimal depression, 14–19: Mild depression, 20–28: Moderate depression, 29–63: Severe depression. The BDI-II has a high internal consistency reliability of $\alpha = 0.92$ (Beck et al., 1996). In Nigeria, Yusuf and Bello (2024) revalidated the BDI-II among secondary school students in northern Nigeria, reporting a reliability coefficient of $\alpha = 0.89$. Their study affirmed the BDI-II's validity and sensitivity for use in school-based mental health assessments.

Technique for data Analysis

The data for this study were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics involves frequencies, simple percentages; mean and standard deviations were used to analyze the demographic features of the respondents. On the other hand, inferential statistics which involved simple linear regression and multiple linear regressions were used to test the stated hypotheses.

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Simple linear regression was used to test hypotheses one and two while multiple regression analysis was used to test hypothesis three. The whole analysis was performed via statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS) version 25.

Hypothesis One: This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of locus of control on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Summary results of linear regression table showing the significant influence of locus of control on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Predictor	**B (Unstd.)**	**Std. Error**	**Beta (Std.)**	**T**	**Sig.**
Constant	14.82	0.88	-	16.84	.05
Internal Locus of Control	-3.96	0.72	-0.31	-5.50	.05
External Locus of Control	4.87	0.75	0.36	6.49	.05

Dependent Variable: **Depression*; Sig .000; p < .05***

The results of table 4.2 shows that the regression analysis revealed that internal locus of control significantly and negatively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = -0.31$, $t = -5.50$, $p < .05$), This indicates that an increase in internal locus of control was

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associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms among adolescents. In contrast, external locus of control was found to have a significant positive influence on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = 0.36$, $t = 6.49$, $p < .05$), This implies that as adolescents' reliance on external factors such as fate, luck, or powerful others increases, their level of depression also increases. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis Two: This hypothesis stated that there will be a significant influence of self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary results of linear regression table showing the significant influence of self-esteem on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Predictor	**B (Unstd.)**	**Std. Error**	**Beta (Std.)**	**T**	**Sig.**
Constant	19.36	0.91	-	21.27	.05
Low Self-Esteem	5.42	0.79	0.39	6.86	.05
High Self-Esteem	-4.98	0.77	-0.35	-6.47	.05

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Dependent Variable: **Depression*; Sig .000; p < .05***

The results of table 4.3 shows that the regression analysis revealed that low self-esteem significantly and positively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria (β = 0.39, t = 6.86, p < .05), This result indicates that adolescents with low self-esteem were more likely to experience higher levels of depressive symptoms. Conversely, high self-esteem showed a significant negative influence on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria (β = -0.35, t = -6.47, p < .05), This indicates that adolescents with high self-esteem experienced lower levels of depression. Therefore, this hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The results of hypothesis on revealed that internal locus of control significantly and negatively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria (β = –0.31, t = -5.50, p < .05), This indicates that an increase in internal locus of control was associated with a decrease in depressive symptoms among adolescents. In contrast, external locus of control was found to have a significant positive influence on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria (β = 0.36, t = 6.49, p < .05), This implies that as adolescents' reliance on external factors such as fate, luck, or powerful others increases,

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their level of depression also increases. This finding aligns with recent literature which suggests that adolescents who perceive themselves as having control over life events demonstrate better emotional adjustment and lower depressive symptoms. Contemporary studies emphasize that internal locus of control promotes psychological resilience by enabling adolescents to actively cope with academic, social, and emotional stressors (Adebayo &Lawal, 2023; Chen & Xu, 2024).

Recent adolescent mental health research further indicates that internal locus of control enhances self-efficacy and adaptive coping strategies, which in turn buffer against emotional distress. Adolescents who believe their actions can influence outcomes are more likely to engage in problem-focused coping and exhibit optimism, reducing vulnerability to depression (Kumar & Singh, 2025). The negative beta coefficient obtained in this study confirms that as internal locus of control increases, depressive symptoms decline, reinforcing current psychological models of perceived control and wellbeing.

Conversely, the positive influence of external locus of control on depression found in this study corroborates recent findings which associate external control beliefs with helplessness, emotional passivity, and depressive tendencies among adolescents (Ogunleye et al., 2024; Park & Lee, 2026).

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The findings of hypothesis two revealed that low self-esteem significantly and positively influence depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = 0.39$, $t = 6.86$, $p < .05$), This result indicates that adolescents with low self-esteem were more likely to experience higher levels of depressive symptoms. Conversely, high self-esteem showed a significant negative influence on depression among secondary school adolescents in , Karu local government, Nasarawa State, Nigeria ($\beta = -0.35$, $t = -6.47$, $p < .05$), This indicates that adolescents with high self-esteem experienced lower levels of depression. This result is consistent with recent literature identifying self-esteem as a central determinant of adolescent emotional wellbeing. Studies conducted between 2023 and 2025 consistently report that adolescents with low self-esteem exhibit higher levels of depressive symptoms due to persistent negative self-evaluation and emotional insecurity (Mensah & Boateng, 2023; Orth& Robins, 2024). Recent empirical evidence further explains that low self-esteem predisposes adolescents to maladaptive cognitive patterns, including self-blame, rumination, and heightened sensitivity to failure. These cognitive vulnerabilities increase emotional distress and contribute significantly to depression during adolescence (Zhang et al., 2025). The strong positive beta value obtained in this study confirms the magnitude of low self-esteem as a risk factor for depression. In contrast, high self-esteem was found to be a protective factor, reducing

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depressive symptoms among adolescents. Contemporary research highlights that adolescents with high self-esteem demonstrate greater emotional regulation, optimism, and stress tolerance, which protect against depression (Adeyemi & Okafor, 2024; Wilson et al., 2026). The negative regression coefficient observed in this study supports recent findings that positive self-worth enhances resilience and psychological stability during adolescence.

Conclusions

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that locus of control and self-esteem are crucial psychological determinants of depression among secondary school adolescents. Adolescents who possess internal control beliefs and high self-esteem are better equipped to manage emotional challenges, whereas those with external control beliefs and low self-esteem are more vulnerable to depressive symptoms. The combined influence of these variables underscores the need for integrated interventions targeting both self-esteem and locus of control to enhance adolescent mental health.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

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1. School counsellors should develop programs that strengthen internal locus of control by teaching adolescents problem-solving, goal-setting, and decision-making skills.
2. Programs designed to improve adolescents' self-esteem should be integrated into school counseling services to promote positive self-concept and emotional resilience.
3. Teachers should create supportive classroom environments that encourage autonomy, confidence, and active participation to reinforce internal control beliefs.

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