

A B S T R A C T

The main concern of this study was the effect of anxiety, and particularly test anxiety, on the academic achievement of students in secondary high schools. Mental ability and socio economic status were also included and school type differences were explored.

The sample was taken from three high schools and three new secondary schools. Although anxiety effect on high school students was the focus of the investigation, the sample from new secondary schools allowed a comparison between these schools on some of the variables.

The data were analysed using various statistical methods including "Student's t", correlation techniques, ANOVA and Tukey's Post Hoc procedure.

Results

A high level of test and general anxiety was found in the sample overall and in the subsamples of high and new secondary school students. There was no significant difference on test anxiety between sex, school type or school location between groups in the sample, although urban groups were significantly more anxious generally than their rural counterparts. Mental ability was the only variable which contributed significantly to the explanation of the variance in academic performance. Neither test anxiety nor general anxiety added significantly to the

explanation of variance in academic performance as measured by externally administered school leaving examinations.

Test anxiety was significantly related to general anxiety but was not significantly related to any other variable used. Low SES was found to be significantly related to high anxiety for the sample overall and for the female sub-group.

It was recommended that other variables should be considered in further examinations of anxiety and its relationship to performance in Jamaican students, and that a longitudinal study may prove useful. Also, it was suggested that the pervasive manifestation of high anxiety among secondary school students had implications for the pedagogic process in Jamaican secondary schools and for child rearing practices.