

ABSTRACT

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This study aimed at establishing (a) the level of performance in a biology test of Jamaican grade 10 students; (b) the types of attitudes the students had towards biology; (c) if there were any significant differences in the students biology performance linked to their gender, school type, location, socio-economic background and their attitudes towards biology, and (d) if there were any significant relationships among the students' gender, school-type, location socio-economic background, attitudes towards biology and their performance in the biology test.

The sample consisted of 513 Jamaican grade 10 students, randomly selected from 10 traditional and comprehensive high schools from St. Thomas, Kingston, St. Andrew and St. Catherine. 125 of whom came from all-boys', 115 from all-girls' and 273 from mixed schools, 239 and 273 of whom were children of professionals and non-professionals respectively. Concerning attitudes towards biology 117, 241 and 155 of them had good, moderate and low attitudes

respectively. Data were collected with an adapted 50 item multiple choice biology test, and an adapted 25 - item biology attitude questionnaire.

The results indicated that the performance of most of the students in the biology test was fairly "average"; most of the students had high positive attitudes towards biology; there were no gender differences in their performance but all-girls' schools scored significantly higher on the test than all-boys' and mixed schools, rural school students performed significantly better than urban students, students from professional parents /guardians performed significantly better than students from non-professional parents/ guardians, students with highly positive attitudes towards biology performed significantly better than those with average (moderate) and low attitudes towards biology respectively; there were no relationships among the students' gender, school-type, location and their biology performance, however there were statistically significant positive but weak, relationships between (a) the students' socio-economic background and their biology performance ($r = .42$), (b) the students' attitudes to biology and their biology performance ($r = .46$).