

ABSTRACT

This investigation arose from a need to offer additional explanations for the unsatisfactory performance of Jamaican students on external examinations taken at grade 11; it was thus designed to explore the relationship between school anxiety and academic achievement. A number of independent variables (reflecting the effect of home/school environment and personality) were also included in the design. The sample consisted of 131 students drawn from the three secondary school types in Jamaica. Data were analysed using simple and multi-variate statistics, so that the following objectives could be achieved:

OBJECTIVE 1: *Identification of the relationship between School Anxiety and Academic Achievement*

While no significant relationship appeared between these measures, they were indirectly linked through "intermediary" variables such as Academic Self Concept and School Tone. Factor analysis showed Achievement and Anxiety appearing on two separate factors. However, each of these, interestingly, loaded negatively (although insignificantly) on the factor defined by the other.

OBJECTIVE 2: *Identification of the best predictors of School Anxiety and Academic Achievement*

Regression results showed that the independent variables explained 18 percent variance in Anxiety (the best predictors being Neuroticism/Stability and Academic Self Concept), and 54 percent variance in Achievement (Past Experiences of Success/Failure, Aspirations and Academic Self Concept being the strongest predictors). That Academic Self Concept featured so prominently in both analyses (negatively, in the case of Anxiety) attested to its importance to this research.

OBJECTIVE 3: *Identification of the effects of School Type and Sex on the variables under investigation*

There were no significant Anxiety/Achievement correlations demonstrated in either the School Type or Sex matrices, although in most instances indirect relationships were observed. ANOVA results identified significant differences

among the school types on several dimensions, including Achievement, (although not for Anxiety); while the only sex difference forthcoming was on Achievement, with males scoring significantly higher.

Based on these findings, a number of recommendations were offered, relative to the Jamaican educational system and its secondary school students.