

Causal Attributions and Academic Expectations as Correlates of Academic Achievement in Secondary Schools in Kiambu County, Kenya

Ngunu Susan Njeri

Abstract

This study investigated the explanations that students give on achievement outcomes and their academic expectations in Thika Sub-County, Kiambu County. The main objective of the study was to find out if academic achievement was related to causal attributions and academic expectations. Gender differences in causal attributions and academic expectations were also tested. The study also established the interaction effect of causal attributions, academic expectations and academic achievement. The research was guided by Weiner's model of Achievement Attribution and the Expectancy Value theory. A correlational research design was used. The study population consisted of 21 schools with a population of 2660 (1540 boys, 1120 girls) students. The schools were stratified based on whether they were national, extra-county or county and whether single or co-educational. Simple random sampling was used to select ten schools and 600 form three students (320 boys, 280 girls) through proportionate allocation. The research instruments included Multidimensional Causality Attribution Scale and Academic Expectancy Scale questionnaire. The research instruments were piloted using 25 students who did not participate in the actual study. Reliability was tested by computing cronbach alpha coefficient (α). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. The statistics used were means, standard deviations and analysis of variance (ANOVA), t-tests, Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient and multiple regression. The major finding was that causal attributions and academic expectations were significantly correlated to academic achievement. The strongest correlation was between controllable attributions for failure and academic achievement ($r(583) = -.34, p < .01$). In addition, there were significant positive relationship between positive academic expectations ($r(583) = .28, p < .01$) and a negative significant relationship between negative academic expectations ($r(583) = -.38, p < .01$) and academic achievement. Significant gender differences in causal attributions for failure ($t(583) = 3.59, p < .05$) and negative academic expectations ($t(583) = 3.45, p < .05$) were also found. The results indicated that there was an interaction effect between causal attributions and academic expectations in determining the academic achievement. The model involving both factors yielded a higher predictive ability for academic achievement. The conclusion was that students formed maladaptive causal attributions and biased academic expectations that negatively affected their academic achievement. The study made recommendations to the teachers, parents and educators to come up with intervention measures such as, attributional retraining, encouraging and helping students form positive academic expectations. The researcher also recommended for further research in the area of causal attributions and academic expectations.

Full text: <https://ir-library.ku.ac.ke/handle/123456789/19852>