

Selected Correlates of Examination Anxiety and Academic Performance of Students in Public Secondary Schools in Khwisero Subcounty, Kakamega County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the relationship between exams anxiety, academic performance and other selected correlates, which were, academic procrastination, Locus of control and academic resilience. Indeed, the phenomenon of exams anxiety has been widely studied in relation to academic performance. However, exams anxiety, as a psychological construct, also needs to be understood in terms of other related factors that might precipitate it. In addition, the study also investigated sex differences in relation to the above variables. The study was conducted on form four students in public secondary schools who attempted the 2012 KCSE exams in Khwisero Sub-county, Kakamega County, Kenya. Exams anxiety and such related correlates are among factors that influence the levels of academic performance in students in Khwisero Sub-county, which are relatively low as compared to other Sub-counties in Kakamega County. The study was guided by the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which holds that one needs resources to cope with and overcome stressful situations, such as exams related anxieties in students. The interplay of the correlates mentioned above could constitute such resources. Purposive sampling, stratified random sampling and simple random sampling designs were used accordingly to select 359 form four students. These sampling procedures yielded 203 boys and 156 girls for the study. A questionnaire containing subscales on test anxiety, academic procrastination, Locus of control and academic resilience was used for data collection. This questionnaire was initially piloted to assert its validity and reliability. The study adopted a correlational research design. The hypotheses on the relationship between exams anxiety, academic performance and the selected correlates were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. On the other hand, the hypothesis on sex differences in these variables was tested by Independent Samples t-Test. All the tests were carried out at 0.05 level of significance. The findings indicated that majority of students experienced exams anxiety; girls were high on academic resilience and were more of internalizers, while boys were high in academic procrastination and were more of externalizers. Further, the findings showed that exams anxiety was significant and negatively related to academic performance; academic procrastination positively and significantly correlated with exams anxiety, but negatively and insignificantly correlated with academic performance; Locus of control negatively and insignificantly correlated with exams anxiety, but positively and insignificantly correlated with academic performance; and academic resilience negatively and insignificantly correlated with exams anxiety, but positively and insignificantly correlated with academic performance. The study concluded that exams anxiety was a real phenomenon that affected students' academic performance in exams, and that academic procrastination, locus of control and academic resilience are important factors in relation to exams anxiety and academic performance. The study recommended that the issue of exams anxiety should be involved in guidance and counseling policy strategies; and that further research should also consider other exams anxiety correlates such as testwiseness, subject choice, teaching pedagogy and intelligence.

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