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The effects of anxiety and depression on the academic achievement of African American youth

Tiffany Grayer, Michael Lambert, and Alison Levitch

Multiple factors might influence African American youths' academic performance, but few predictors have been subjected by empirical scrutiny. Anxiety and depression are documented as being negatively associated with academic achievement, yet research examining the relationship between these factors, specifically in black children is virtually nonexistent—especially since many black children are disproportionately subjected to economic and other stressors; including the effects of racism in educational and other settings. By focusing on the association of anxiety and depression with academic achievement, this study contributes to a decrement in the dearth of research on two factors that contribute to the disparities in academic achievement African American children experience. Data was collected from parent- and teacher-reports via the Behavioral Assessment for Children of African Heritage on children ages 6 to 18 (i.e., identified as suffering from behavioral and emotional concerns and from the general population) in Michigan and New Jersey, (N =477). Structural equation modeling procedures revealed good model-to-data fit and that parent-and-teacher-reported child depression is negatively associated with academic achievement. The findings suggest that eradication of black children's depression and its effects might contribute to increments in their academic achievement.