

Causal-Explanatory Model of Academic Performance in Social Anxious Adolescents

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Abstract : Although social anxiety is one of the most prevalent disorders in adolescents and causes considerable difficulties and social distress in those with the disorder, to date very few studies have explored the impact of social anxiety on academic adjustment in student populations. The aim of this study was analyze the effect of social anxiety on school functioning in Secondary Education. Specifically, we examined the relationship between social anxiety and self-concept, academic goals, causal attributions, intellectual aptitudes, and learning strategies, personality traits, and academic performance, with the purpose of creating a causal-explanatory model of academic performance. The sample consisted of 2,022 students in the seven to ten grades of Compulsory Secondary Education in Spain ($M = 13.18$; $SD = 1.35$; 51.1% boys). We found that: (a) social anxiety has a direct positive effect on internal attributional style, and a direct negative effect on self-concept. Social anxiety also has an indirect negative effect on internal causal attributions; (b) prior performance (first academic trimester) exerts a direct positive effect on intelligence, achievement goals, academic self-concept, and final academic performance (third academic trimester), and a direct negative effect on internal causal attributions. It also has an indirect positive effect on causal attributions (internal and external), learning goals, achievement goals, and study strategies; (c) intelligence has a direct positive effect on learning goals and academic performance (third academic trimester); (d) academic self-concept has a direct positive effect on internal and external attributional style. Also, has an indirect effect on learning goals, achievement goals, and learning strategies; (e) internal attributional style has a direct positive effect on learning strategies and learning goals. Has a positive but indirect effect on achievement goals and learning strategies; (f) external attributional style has a direct negative effect on learning strategies and learning goals and a direct positive effect on internal causal attributions; (g) learning goals have direct positive effect on learning strategies and achievement goals. The structural equation model fit the data well ($CFI = .91$; $RMSEA = .04$), explaining 93.8% of the variance in academic performance. Finally, we emphasize that the new causal-explanatory model proposed in the present study represents a significant contribution in that it includes social anxiety as an explanatory variable of cognitive-motivational constructs.

Keywords : academic performance, adolescence, cognitive-motivational variables, social anxiety

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