Chapter 4
Do Jamaican Principals’ Leadership Styles Correlate to Violence in School?

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ABSTRACT

The increase of violence among young people in the high school environment has become a concern among parents and educators alike. A study was designed to address whether there is a relationship between the leadership styles of principals and violence in secondary schools in rural Jamaica. Based on a correlational design survey of 414 teachers from 61 schools in five parishes, seven leadership styles were correlated with the amount of violence at each school. The result showed that there was a statistically significant positive correlation ($r = 0.88$) at the $p < .05$ level was observed in autocratic leadership in the Parish of St. Ann. A moderate significant correlation was recorded in St. Catherine in democratic leadership ($r = -0.52$) at the level of $p < 0.01$. 

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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, the then Minister of Education, Jamaica, suggested that principals, teachers, and administrators did not see security as an important function of their role in education (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008). However, Miller (2016) articulated that education has a major role to play in any society in deepening economic prosperity and in increasing social mobility. Miller (2016) further stated that for education to produce those outcomes effective leadership from governments and school principals must be in place and in sync. Miller stated, “The gap between what principals do versus what they are perceived to do is a real one, due, in part, to a lack of information about their work roles and judgements based on anecdotes and not facts” (p. 2). The question, therefore, is whether there is a relationship between the leadership styles of principal and violence in secondary schools in rural Jamaica. A research was done in 5 parishes to test whether there is a statistically significant relationship between principal’s leadership style and violence. Miliband (in Miller, 2016) described government and school principals as “either the motor of progress or its handbrake” (p. 1). Implied is that a school principal’s leadership style can drive or hinder the effectiveness of law and order in schools; law and order that can impact student and staff behaviour in a negative or positive way.

Background

Jamaica is one of the largest of the English-speaking Caribbean islands, the island has a population size of approximately 2.7 million people who are 90.9% Blacks, 2.3% East Indians, 0.2% Whites, 0.2% Chinese, 7.3% mixed heritage, and 0.1% other ethnicities (Demography of Jamaica, 2010). The island is divided into 14 parishes and further grouped into 3 Counties – Cornwall, Middlesex and Surrey. The parishes that form this study are Clarendon, Manchester, Saint Ann, Saint Catherine, Saint Mary. The five parishes account for a population of 1,183,361 Jamaicans.

The island of Jamaica was ruled by the British, until 1962 when Jamaica became an independent nation. According to Jude, (2003), school leaders taught the principles, morals, values, and ethical behaviours upheld by churches and infused the culture and teachings of religious denominations. After independence, the school system gradually shifted from church control to governmental control. Government then introduced several modern policies and programs in the schools.

The Vision 2030 Jamaica National Development Plan indicated that crime and violence levels in the country are high (Planning Institute of Jamaica 2009). According to Chevannes (2004), students in secondary schools are often exposed to a culture of violence that has created an epidemic and heightened concern for the future of the nation. A survey of 11 urban schools revealed that 89% of students were
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