



Effect of Socio-Demographics, Health-Related Problems, and Family Structure on Chronic Absenteeism Among Children

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Effect of Socio-Demographics, Health-Related Problems, and Family Structure on Chronic Absenteeism Among Children

Abstract

Purpose/Background: From 5 to 7.5 million school children are chronically absent, defined as missing ≥ 15 days of school within a year. Students miss schools due to various reasons such as health, socioeconomic status, and environmental factors. We examined child's health and behavior, family structure, and socio-demographics to understand chronic absenteeism.

Materials & Methods: The population included children ages 6 to 17 years from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) years 2008-2013. Multivariable logistic regressions were used to identify the risk factors of chronic absenteeism, adjusting for the complex sampling design.

Results: Among socio-demographic variables, age ≥ 14 years, race/ethnicity, lower-income family, public health insurance, US-born, and speaking English at home were associated with chronic absenteeism. Asians, Mexican Hispanics, and blacks have lower chronic absenteeism than whites. Among health-related variables, children using an inhaler for asthma, having behavioral problems, and less healthy than other children were more likely to be chronically absent. Among family variables, a smaller family size was a risk factor for chronic absenteeism.

Discussion/Conclusion: Asthma and behavioral problems were highly associated with chronic absenteeism. The identification of children at risk for chronic absenteeism will help the educational professionals identify the barriers to academic achievements and develop integrated educational interventions and policies to support disadvantaged children.

Keywords

Chronic Absenteeism; Children; Family Structure

Authors

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Table 1. Subject Characteristics and Percentage of Chronic Absenteeism

Variable	Total		Chronic Absenteeism		Total		Chronic Absenteeism
	Unweighted N	Weighted % (SE)	Weighted % (SE)		Unweighted N	Weighted % (SE)	Weighted % (SE)
Socio-Demographic Variable				Family Structure Variable			
Age				Family Type			
6-13 yrs.	15,815	68.3 (0.4)	1.7 (0.1)	Two-parent	22,524	69.4 (0.8)	1.8 (0.1)
14-17 yrs.	6,696	31.7 (0.4)	3.1 (0.3)	Single-parent	12,236	27.9 (0.8)	3.0 (0.2)
Sex				No-parent	1,167	2.7 (0.2)	3.4 (0.8)
Boy	11,524	51.0 (0.5)	2.1 (0.1)	Family Size			
Girl	10,987	49.0 (0.5)	2.3 (0.2)	≤4	18,632	58.2 (0.9)	2.5 (0.2)
Race/Ethnicity				>4	17,295	41.8 (0.9)	1.7 (0.2)
White	7,342	56.4 (1.3)	2.6 (0.2)	# of Elderly (≥65 yrs.)*	35,927	0.05 (0.00)	0.08 (0.01)
Black	4,992	14.4 (0.8)	1.7 (0.3)	# of Preschool Children (≤5 yrs.)*	35,927	0.34 (0.01)	0.31 (0.03)
Mexican	5,762	14.8 (1.2)	1.4 (0.1)	# of Adult (≥18 yrs.)			
Other Hispanic	2,415	7.0 (0.4)	2.4 (0.3)	0-1	6,255	15.0 (0.5)	2.8 (0.3)
Filipino	275	1.0 (0.2)	2.1 (1.1)	2	19,585	60.2 (0.7)	1.9 (0.1)
Other Asians	979	3.4 (0.2)	0.5 (0.2)	≥3	10,087	24.8 (0.6)	2.5 (0.2)
AI/AN/NHPI	330	1.3 (0.3)	3.5 (0.8)	Health/Behavior Variable			
Other	416	1.8 (0.2)	2.1 (0.7)	Asthma & Medication			
Highest Education in Family				No Asthma	19,522	87.0 (0.3)	1.8 (0.1)
≤High School	9,828	31.7 (0.9)	2.6 (0.2)	Both Inhaler and Preventive Medicine	1,496	6.5 (0.2)	4.1 (0.7)
Some College	6,358	28.6 (0.6)	2.4 (0.2)	Inhaler Only	125	0.7 (0.1)	1.5 (0.9)
Bachelor's	3,689	21.8 (0.7)	1.8 (0.3)	Preventive Medicine Only	931	4.0 (0.2)	5.2 (1.3)
≥Graduate	2,622	17.9 (0.8)	1.5 (0.3)	Neither Inhaler nor Preventive Medicine	417	1.8 (0.1)	11.7 (2.2)
Income				ADHD			
Poor	8,815	25.0 (0.8)	3.1 (0.2)	Yes	2,194	10.7 (0.4)	2.0 (0.1)
Low	4,195	15.6 (0.4)	2.4 (0.3)	No	20,314	89.3 (0.4)	3.8 (0.4)
Middle	5,833	32.0 (0.7)	2.2 (0.2)	Obesity			
High	3,668	27.4 (0.9)	1.3 (0.2)	Normal	13,771	83.1 (0.5)	2.2 (0.1)
Insurance				Overweight	2,240	11.5 (0.4)	2.5 (0.3)
Any Private	10,168	61.0 (1.0)	1.8 (0.1)	Obese	1,197	5.4 (0.2)	4.8 (0.8)
Public Only	10,666	32.4 (1.0)	3.1 (0.2)	Behavioral Problem			
Uninsured	1,677	6.6 (0.4)	1.3 (0.4)	CIS<15	19,636	86.4 (0.4)	1.6 (0.1)
Born in US				CIS≥15	2,875	13.6 (0.4)	6.1 (0.5)
No	6,522	17.3 (0.9)	0.8 (0.2)	Number of Dental Care Visits*	22,511	1.38 (0.03)	1.53 (0.19)
Yes	15,981	82.7 (0.9)	2.3 (0.1)	Less Healthy Than Other Child			
Language at Home				No	20,720	93.0 (0.2)	1.6 (0.1)
Other	1,542	4.7 (0.2)	1.2 (0.1)	Yes	1,776	7.0 (0.2)	10.1 (0.8)
English	20,952	95.3 (0.2)	2.4 (0.1)				

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