



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

The Social Science Journal

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/soscij



Truancy as systemic discrimination: Anti-discrimination legislation and its effect on school attendance among immigrant children

Kyung-Eun Yang^a, Seung-Hwan Ham^{b,*}

^a Research Associate, Centre for Global Social Policy, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada

^b Assistant Professor of Educational Administration and Policy, Hanyang University, Seoul, South Korea

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 April 2016

Received in revised form 1 February 2017

Accepted 1 February 2017

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Immigrant youth

Truancy

Systemic discrimination

Anti-discrimination legislation

Immigrant integration

ABSTRACT

This comparative policy analysis demonstrates that patterns of truancy by immigrant status reflect the degree of systemic (anti-)discrimination institutionalized at the societal level. Based on extensive data from 205,512 children in 9,141 secondary schools across 29 OECD countries, a series of hierarchical generalized linear modeling analyses has been conducted. The results indicate that the extent to which a country has institutionalized anti-discrimination policies attenuates the association between immigrant status and school truancy for both first- and second-generation immigrants. This pattern gives credence to the postulation that an occurrence of truancy is not merely an aberrant behavior but a social incident that mirrors the larger structure in which social goods and opportunities are distributed unevenly across different groups of people. This new insight sheds light on the possibility that immigrant children may benefit from truancy reduction interventions to a greater degree in countries with adequate legal and administrative measures for anti-discrimination.

© 2017 Western Social Science Association. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

By migrating to a new country, families often hope to offer their children a brighter future through better education. However, immigrant children usually have to overcome many barriers to be successful at school (Cangià, 2014; Schnepf, 2007). Indeed, an important strand of policy research in education has focused on the educational gap that persists between immigrant children and non-immigrant children. The educational gap that has attracted the greatest attention in research on immigrant children is the achievement gap, i.e., the relatively poor academic per-

formance of many children with immigrant backgrounds (Murat & Frederic, 2015; Schneeweis, 2011). As an OECD report notes, “in most countries, immigrant students lag behind native students in performance; in many countries, the difference is considerable” (Jakubowski, 2011, p. 1). Various socio-economic impediments have been known to contribute to the accumulation of academic risk for these children, such as low levels of parental education, limited sociocultural resources available at home, and insufficient or inadequate support from schools and communities (Buchmann & Hannum, 2001; Zoido, 2012).¹

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: kyungeun.yang@mail.utoronto.ca (K.-E. Yang), hamseunghwan@gmail.com (S.-H. Ham).

¹ Although “many youths from immigrant families [often] outperform their peers in school, . . . [this so-called] immigrant paradox . . . occurs despite higher-than-average rates of social and economic disadvantages in this population as a whole” (Crosnoe & López Turley, 2011, p. 129).

While the achievement gap has been a popular focus of research, truancy among children with an immigrant background – an important contributor to the educational gap – has rarely been discussed despite its significance in youth welfare and educational research. Truancy has been identified as a key indicator of students' academic disengagement (Borgonovi, 2014; Reid, 2014).² Poor attendance at school is associated with low performance, as it signifies a missed opportunity to learn.³ Additionally, school absenteeism is liable to exert a negative influence on the academic climate of the school because it contributes to a disruptive classroom environment (OECD, 2013). School absenteeism also deserves close attention because "truancy may be the beginning of a lifetime of problems for students who routinely skip school" (Garry, 1996). Chronic truancy and subsequent school failure not only put adolescents at risk of involvement in juvenile delinquency (Bell, Rosen, & Dynlacht, 1994; Jarjoura, 1993) but also result in negative consequences in employment opportunities, including high chances of unemployment, unstable patterns of career choice and progression, and narrow occupational choices (Hibbett, Fogelman, & Manor, 1990).⁴

The present study aims to empirically examine whether public policies against discrimination may contribute to the reduction of the educational gap that exists between immigrant children and non-immigrant children in terms of school attendance.⁵ As a report sponsored by the European Commission emphasizes, "school dropout and absenteeism among immigrant pupils are . . . a serious concern [in many countries, which necessitates efforts] to prevent and fight school failure among these children" (Eurydice, 2004, p. 47). An OECD report also notes that "immigrant students in some countries . . . are more likely to be in a school environment characterized by high levels of student absenteeism and a poor disciplinary climate" (OECD, 2010, p. 36).

² School absenteeism is often a precursor to dropping out of school and juvenile delinquency, especially in the case of chronic absenteeism (McCluskey, Bynum, & Patchin, 2004).

³ The PISA 2012 data reveal that absenteeism is a problem in many countries (OECD, 2013). Across OECD countries, 18% of students reported that they had skipped at least one class, and 15% reported that they had missed at least an entire day of school without authorization in the two weeks prior to the PISA survey. Across OECD countries, the students who reported having skipped classes or days of school had lower scores than those who reported not skipping classes or days of school by more than one-third of one standard deviation of the international average score in mathematics.

⁴ Poor school attendance inevitably influences the educational pathway and can cause long-term problems, including low academic performance, diminished educational aspirations, and reduced opportunities for building positive peer relationships (Borgonovi, 2014; Garry, 1996; Hawkins & Catalano, 1992). Truancy is also linked to marital and psychological problems in early adulthood. Hibbett and Fogelman (1990), for example, showed that truants are more likely than their non-truant counterparts to have their first child at a younger age, undergo marital breakdown by their mid-20s, and experience psychological depression.

⁵ In this paper, we use the term "public policies against discrimination" and "anti-discrimination policies" interchangeably to refer to a set of policy measures aimed at protecting the rights of people to be treated equally and fairly. Usually in the form of legal mandates and prohibitions, these policies stipulate that people must be dealt with on an equal basis regardless of their sociocultural group memberships or identity markers (Bell, 2009; Chopin & Germaine, 2014).

We hypothesize that the incidence of truancy among immigrant youth is less likely in countries with a higher level of public policy commitment to anti-discrimination. Truancy among children with an immigrant background, we believe, is not simply the result of certain individual-level attributes. Rather, we posit that truancy is also a manifestation of systemic discrimination that exists in larger society. The development of socio-ecological perspectives of children's well-being (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Earls & Carlson, 2001; Garcia-Coll & Szalacha, 2004) has hinted that the causes of school absenteeism are not limited to individual-level factors, but stretch over multiple layers of social context. Prior research on truancy, however, has paid little analytic attention to public policy arrangements – an important layer of the social context – while paying continued attention to children's immediate environments, such as family, school, and community factors.

By examining truancy at the micro/individual level in relation to systemic discrimination at the macro/society level, the current study hopes to contribute new knowledge addressing the uneven distribution of educational opportunities between different groups of children. In addition, this study will provide useful insights about anti-discrimination policies. In both scholarly and policy circles worldwide, a great deal of attention has been given to anti-discrimination legislation and related policies because they purport to promote social integration in the face of either an increased degree or a sharpened recognition of diversity in society (Bell, 2009; Jacobs & Herman, 2009). Although we have witnessed the spread of public policies that accompany measures of anti-discrimination and multicultural inclusion of immigrants internationally (Cha, Gundara, Ham, & Lee, 2017; Chopin, & Germaine, 2014; Frideres & Biles, 2012), little effort has been made to systematically evaluate the policies in this regard. As Kymlicka (2012) notes, despite "multiculturalism's aspirations . . . we don't yet have enough evidence" (p. 10) to substantiate the effect of multicultural policies.⁶ The current study is an effort to fill this research void by focusing on anti-discrimination measures – i.e., an integral component of multicultural policies – and their effects on the school attendance/truancy patterns of immigrant children when compared with their non-immigrant counterparts.

⁶ Although there is no universally-accepted definition of a multicultural policy, it usually refers to a set of public policy measures aimed at building and sustaining a united society inclusive of people from ethno-culturally diverse backgrounds. Typically, multicultural policy measures pay special attention to the social integration of three types of minorities: immigrant groups, historic national minorities, and indigenous peoples (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006). In this respect, the incorporation of anti-discrimination measures into immigrant integration policies may be understood as part of a broader effort toward the promotion of multicultural inclusion and social integration. For further discussion, refer to the Multiculturalism Policy Index (<http://www.queensu.ca/mcp/>), a project based at Queen's University that monitors the evolution of multiculturalism policies across a number of countries.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4761946>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4761946>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)