

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 408 391

UD 031 744

AUTHOR Holden, E. Wayne; Danseco, Evangeline R.
TITLE Child and Family Predictors of Academic Functioning in Homeless Children.
PUB DATE Aug 96
NOTE 5p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (104th, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 9-13, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Age Differences; *Children; *Cognitive Processes; Disadvantaged Youth; Educational Attainment; Elementary Secondary Education; Emotional Problems; Family Characteristics; *Homeless People; Mothers; Multivariate Analysis; Parent Background; *Prediction; Sex Differences; Urban Youth
IDENTIFIERS Maryland (Baltimore)

ABSTRACT

Differential predictors of the educational achievement status of homeless children were studied using multivariate statistical modeling. The effects of more general influences such as age, gender, and maternal educational level were studied before the influence of intellectual, behavioral, and emotional factors was examined. Participants were families of 127 homeless children receiving services in a comprehensive health care program for homeless children in Baltimore (Maryland). Results of the study provide support for age, gender, and maternal educational level as important predictors of academic achievement in school-aged homeless children and adolescents. Overall cognitive functioning, however, was the most salient predictor of academic performance. This finding suggests that the depressed cognitive functioning found in homeless and disadvantaged children is an important focus for remedial efforts. Emotional distress and behavioral problems were significant contributors to academic achievement levels beyond background and cognitive factors, and should also be targets for efforts to improve academic achievement and learning potential. Characteristics of homelessness such as residential instability and the level of major life stressors did not account for significant proportions of the variance in academic achievement. (Contains five references.) (SLD)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

CHILD AND FAMILY PREDICTORS OF ACADEMIC FUNCTIONING IN HOMELESS CHILDREN

E. Wayne Holden and Evangeline R. Danseco
Department of Pediatrics
University of Maryland School of Medicine

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Wayne Holden

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper presented at the American Psychology Association 104th Annual meeting in
Toronto, Canada, August, 1996.

Research on the effects of homelessness on children's educational, developmental and mental health status has yielded inconsistent results. While some investigations have reported serious detrimental effects among the majority of children in homeless families (e.g., Bassuk & Rosenberg, 1990; Zima, Wells & Freeman, 1994), others have reported more conservative estimates consistent with outcomes typically reported for children in impoverished, housed families (e.g., Masten, Miliotis, Graham-Berman, Ramirez & Neeman, 1993; Rescorla, Parker & Stolley, 1991). In a recent review of studies on the mental health of homeless children, Holden, Horton and Danseco (1995) noted that such inconsistencies reflect conceptual and methodological limitations of research in this area. Recommendations were made for avoiding specific methodological pitfalls and utilizing existing frameworks in developmental psychopathology as conceptual bases for guiding research in this area. The use of multivariate analytic approaches which hierarchically control for the influence of general factors related to poverty before examining the specific contextual factors of homelessness that may influence outcomes was highly recommended.

The purpose of the present investigation was to identify differential predictors of school aged homeless children's educational achievement status utilizing multivariate statistical modeling. We were specifically interested in convarying out the effects of more general influences (e.g., age, gender, maternal educational level) prior to examining the influence of intellectual, behavioral and emotional factors as predictors of educational achievement status. Finally, we evaluated the effects of major life stressors and residential instability once the variance related to more general factors and current cognitive, behavioral and emotional status were statistically controlled.

Method

Participants for this study were homeless families receiving services in a comprehensive health care program for homeless children in Baltimore City, the Families in Transition (FIT) program. The sample consisted of 127 school aged children with a mean age of 10.6 (SD = 2.1). Forty-nine percent of the children were male and 51% were female. Mean number of school years completed by the mothers was 11.8 (SD = 1.7).

Participants were evaluated at the time of intake into the program. Mothers participated in a structured interview with social work staff to evaluate family history of homelessness and parental health and mental health history. In addition, mothers completed the Child Behavior Checklist and the life stress scale from the Parenting Stress Index. Children were independently evaluated by a psychologist and were administered the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale: Fourth Edition to assess intellectual status, the Children's Depression Inventory to evaluate current emotional status, and the Wide Range Achievement Test-Revised to assess academic achievement levels.

Results

Overall performance on the measures was consistent with the general literature on the educational and mental health of homeless children. The mean overall IQ score from the SBIV was 89.0 (SD = 12.3) and quite consistent with the mean results reported for impoverished inner city samples participating in the SBIV standardization. However, overall academic achievement was below the levels predicted by the overall intellectual level obtained in this study in the areas of mathematics (mean standard score = 83.9, SD = 16.8), reading (mean standard score = 83.6, SD = 18.5), and spelling (mean spelling score = 85.1, SD = 19.2). The overall mean T-score (M = 55.4, SD = 12.2) on the Child Behavior Checklist was elevated compared to norms, but once again consistent with the published literature on homeless children. The mean Children's Depression Inventory score (M = 8.9, SD = 6.6) was not significantly higher than normative data. Number of family residential changes in the last year averaged 5.2 (SD = 14.5) and was used as a variable to represent residential instability.

Hierarchical regression analyses were computed to evaluate the relationships of the predictor variables to academic achievement scores. Age, gender, and maternal educational level were entered as a block to control for their effects followed by the full scale score from the SBIV, the CDI total score, the CBCL total T-score and the number of moves in the last year. Approximately 46% of the variance was accounted for in the equation predicting mathematics achievement scores with age, gender, intellectual level, and level of depression as significant predictors. Nearly 48% of the variance was predicted in reading achievement scores with age, maternal educational level, intellectual level, level of depression, and level of behavior problems as significant predictors. Approximately 46% of the variance in spelling achievement scores was accounted for in regression analyses with maternal educational level, intellectual level, level of depression, and level of behavior problems as significant predictors. It is interesting to note that neither major life stressors or number of family residential changes in the last year accounted for significant proportions of variance in academic achievement scores.

Discussion

The results of our study provide support for age, gender, and maternal educational level as important predictors of academic achievement performance in school aged homeless children and adolescents. Overall cognitive functioning, however, was the most salient predictor of academic performance indicating that depressed cognitive functioning found in homeless and disadvantaged children is an important factor to focus on in remediation efforts. It should also be noted that emotional distress and behavioral problems were significant contributors to academic achievement levels beyond background and cognitive factors and should also be included as important targets for efforts aimed at improving academic achievement and learning potential. Characteristics of homelessness such as residential instability and level of major life stressors did not account for significant proportions of the variance in academic achievement.

References

Bassuk, E. & Rosenberg, L. (1990). Psychosocial characteristics of homeless children and children with homes. Pediatrics, 85, 257-261.

Holden, E.W., Horton, L. & Danseco, E. (1995). The mental health of homeless children. Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 2, 165-178.

Masten, A.S., Miliotis, D., Graham-Berman, S.A., Ramirez, M.L., & Neeman, J.U. (1993). Children in homeless families: Risks to mental health and development. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61, 335-343.

Rescorla, L., Parker, R. & Stolley, P. (1991). Ability, achievement and adjustment in homeless children. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 61, 210-220.

Zima, B.T., Wells, K.B., & Freeman, H.E. (1994). Emotional and behavioral problems and severe academic delays among sheltered homeless children in Los Angeles county. American Journal of Public Health, 84, 260-264.



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)



REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

UD031744

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: <u>Child and Family Predictors of Academic Functioning in Homeless Children.</u>	
Author(s): <u>E. Wayne Holden, Ph.D. and Evangelina R. Daneseo</u>	
Corporate Source: <u>University of Maryland</u>	Publication Date: <u>1996</u>

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education (RIE)*, are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and microfiche/CD-ROM, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS) or other ERIC vendors. Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following actions is allowed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following two options and sign at the bottom of the page.

*
 ↑
 Check here
 For Level 1 Release:
 Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical) and paper copy.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 1

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Level 2

↑
 Check here
 For Level 2 Release:
 Permitting reproduction in microfiche (4" x 6" film) or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic or optical), but not in paper copy.

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) immediate permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic/optical media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Sign Here → Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>	Printed Name/Position/Title: <u>E. Wayne Holden, Ph.D.</u>
Organization: <u>Univ of Maryland Schol of Medicine Dept of Peds 630 West Fayette St. Baltimore, MD 21201</u>	Telephone: <u>410 706 6538</u>
*	E-mail address: <u>eholden@umfmed.ab.umd.edu</u>
*	FAX: <u>(410) 706-0146</u> Date: <u>5/21/99</u>

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

