

PEER REVIEW HISTORY

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ARTICLE DETAILS

TITLE (PROVISIONAL)	EDUCATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN SICKNESS ABSENCE TRENDS AMONG YOUNG EMPLOYEES FROM 2002 TO 2013 IN HELSINKI, FINLAND
AUTHORS	Sumanen, Hilla; Lahelma, Eero; Lahti, Jouni; Pietilainen, Olli; Rahkonen, Ossi

VERSION 1 - REVIEW

REVIEWER	Paul Froom Tel Aviv University, Israel
REVIEW RETURNED	12-Jun-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	The cohort is poorly described. There are no job descriptions. We don't know if the workforce is stable or not. The outcome measure (absenteeism spell) is not defined. The conclusion is not warranted.
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REVIEWER	Teixeira, Liliane National School of Public Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil
REVIEW RETURNED	16-Jun-2015

GENERAL COMMENTS	<p>The article is important and examines trends in educational differences in SA among 25-34-year-old female and male employees in 2002-2013, and to assess the magnitude of the educational differences.</p> <p>Abstract: the authors could include in the summary the economic downturn in 2008 due to job insecurity</p> <p>Introduction:</p> <p>Lines 17-20: change the paragraph to methods. And, the hypothesis added. What do they think they'll find? What are the political and social aspects which show the importance of this study?</p> <p>Table 1: add source.</p> <p>Page 6: What is the national information system on employees? Page 6 – line 11: what reasons to exclude employees working for less than 28 hours a week?</p>
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REVIEWER	Merete Labriola Section of Clinical Social Medicine & Rehabilitation, Institute of Public Health, University of Aarhus. Denmark
REVIEW RETURNED	19-Jan-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	Thank you for the opportunity to read this script, it is interesting and important that you have focus on young people's retention in to the labor market
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VERSION 1 – AUTHOR RESPONSE

Reviewer: 1

Paul Froom
Tel Aviv University, Israel

Please leave your comments for the authors below

The cohort is poorly described. There are no job descriptions. We don't know if the workforce is stable or not. The outcome measure (absenteeism spell) is not defined. The conclusion is not warranted.

- We have clarified the context of our study. The context of our study is described in the Data-section and the amounts of our participants in each educational groups under study are described in detail in Table 1, page 6. We have added examples of jobs which are typical for each educational level to Measures-section, page 7, lines 15-19:

“Educational qualifications are required in many municipal occupations. Employees with basic education usually work in lower occupational positions, with jobs such as bus drivers, cleaners, and maintenance-workers. Typical jobs for lower secondary education are practical nurse and secretary, and for upper secondary education nurse or foremen. Higher education is required in jobs such as teacher or doctor.”

- All permanently and temporarily employed staff is included (with those under 28 weekly working hours and no registered income excluded) due to make sure that the participants under study are those employees who work stable. Workforce turnover is low. The stability of the work force is described in Measures-section, page 6, lines 10-11 and in page 7, lines 1-2:

“All permanently and temporarily employed staff in 2002-2013 and aged 25-34 and 35-54 were initially included in the analyses (Table 1). Employees working for less than 28 hours a week and those with no registered income (being on leave or for other reasons) were excluded.”

- We clarified the description of a sickness absence spell, page 7, lines 3-8:

“SA spells per 100 person-years were calculated annually. SA spell means the period when employee is out of work due to illness. According to the practice of the City of Helsinki, employees may be on self-certified sickness absence up to three days, after that a medical certificate is mandatory. Consecutive and overlapping SA spells were combined. All interruptions in employment for reasons other than the employee's own illness, such as a work injury or caring for a sick child, were excluded from the analyses.”

- We have modified our conclusions to better reflect our findings (page 18 lines 10-13).

Reviewer: 2

Teixeira, Liliane
National School of Public Health, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Brazil

Please leave your comments for the authors below

The article is important and examines trends in educational differences in SA among 25-34-year-old female and male employees in 2002-2013, and to assess the magnitude of the educational differences.

Abstract: the authors could include in the summary the economic downturn in 2008 due to job insecurity

- Added to Abstract/Conclusions: The changes in SA spells may reflect the economic downturn

started in 2008 and resulting job insecurity.

Introduction:

Lines 17-20: change the paragraph to methods. And, the hypothesis added. What do they think they'll find? What are the political and social aspects which show the importance of this study?

- We prefer keeping our aim in the end of the introduction, as it now leads more smoothly to the data-description.

- Added to the end of introduction page 4 lines 20-22:

"We expected to find educational differences in sickness absence, which also remain over time."

References:

Sumanen H, Pietilainen O, Lahti J, et al. Interrelationships between education, occupational class and income as determinants of sickness absence among young employees in 2002–2007 and 2008–2013. BMC Public Health 2015;15:332.

Piha K, Martikainen P, Rahkonen O, et al. Trends in socioeconomic differences in sickness absence among Finnish municipal employees 1990-99. Scand J Public Health 2007;35:348-355.

- In the introduction, page 4, particularly in lines 4-7 and 12-16, are issues that highlight the social aspects (educational level is a key element of socioeconomic position and differences may lead to different resources and life-styles) political aspects (targeting preventive measures, extending working careers).

Table 1: add source.

- We have clarified the heading. The numbers in our table 1 are taken from our study-data.

Page 6: What is the national information system on employees?

- Our data was derived from the employer's registers. We did not use any national information system on employees in Finland in this study.

Page 6 – line 11: what reasons to exclude employees working for less than 28 hours a week?

- Our focus in this study was on full-time employees. Those employees who work less than 28 hours per week, might have sickness absence during their free-time; those spells might not show in the employer's sickness absence register which we used for this study.

Reviewer: 3

Merete Labriola

Section of Clinical Social Medicine & Rehabilitation, Institute of Public Health, University of Aarhus. Denmark

Please leave your comments for the authors below

Thank you for the opportunity to read this script, it is interesting and important that you have focus on young people's retention in to the labor market

- Thank you for the comment.

VERSION 2 – REVIEW

REVIEWER	Liliane Teixeira Oswaldo Cruz Foundation
REVIEW RETURNED	25-Feb-2016

GENERAL COMMENTS	The article is ok.
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