

ABSENTEEISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE CONSIDERATION OF ILLNESS AS ONE OF THE FACTORS IN THE CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE U.S..

In consideration of the affections causing absences it has been necessary to depend upon morbidity statistics compiled largely by the United States Bureau of the Public health and a few summaries from single institutions. In the conclusions drawn from the following tables showing figures which might give one a concrete conception - allowance must be made since morbidity statistics are difficult to gather and since opinion varies greatly in minor diagnoses and as to extent and severity of illnesses recorded.

Several classifications of the causes of absenteeism have been made - the following one prepared by Davis is illustrative and seems to carry about the proper proportion of illness to the causes of absences. Viz:

Fault at home	29%
Dislike of School	26
Bad company	20
Fault of the boy	11
Desire to work	10
Illness	<u>4</u> 100.

From this it is seen that illness as a cause of absenteeism is the least in percentage. This we know will vary with the school and climate as well as the public educational status for the district. However, upon condensing the affections causing absences to a few classes and making a straight average to determine the percentage of time lost from the

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total days of possible attendance due to these affections the total is some below 4%. Reference to table No. II.

School boys and girls were compared by age groups as to absence from sickness and from causes other than sick- on the basis of data collected in representative cities in Missouri in the school sessions 1919-21. The girls in practically every group were absent from school on account of sickness more than boys, but boys were absent from other causes than sickness more than were the girls. During the ages six to sixteen years the sickness decreased with age, but absence from causes other than sickness decreased up to ten or eleven years and then increased with age.

In table IV we have a consideration of the Race, Age and Sex as to average duration of sickness. The white children are ill about same length of time as the negro in both sexes in the age group 5-9 years. In the age group ten to fourteen the white children are ill over longer period of time than the negro for both sexes. In both races it is no noticed that the female children have an average duration of illness which is less than that for the male.

In table number three (III) I have grouped three institutions of distinctly different character. The Teachers College is in connection with the Columbia University; St. Paul's school for boys is a school of about one hundred and sixty five and not a strictly boarding school while the boys school at Concord Massachusetts is a small boarding school with about one hundred and fifteen members. Dr. Sanford in writing about this school (Concord) tells how there was a general tendency to overeating amongst the boys and especially

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when the boys were allowed to go home week end and vacations. This accounts in a large measure for the high percentage of digestive disturbances noted here and probably also a part of the cases included under "other diseases" should also be included. While speaking of the "digestive disturbances" it is interesting to conjecture as to the cause of high percentage in the Teacher's College school. Is it malnutrition or diagnosis? I do not know.

The percent given is in each case the percent of total days school lost from sickness of all causes.

It is interesting to notice the high percent of respiratory infections at the St. Paul's and Concord schools. The percentage of contagious diseases where we have a mixed personnel and the lack of cases in the limited schools is interesting. I feel that this is probably due to social standard and environment rather than sex.

In table #I a heterogeneous group of school children have been gathered in their morbidity status and the race has been considered in the Cleveland group as well. The percentage figures are the percent. of total absences due to illness for the particular cause named. For example, if out 10,000 possible days attendance for a school there were 1,350 days absences due to illness then the cause for such illness and absence is given in percentage of total time lost due to morbidity.

The statistics from Cleveland schools embraces several thousand pupils between the ages of six and eighteen. The race is considered separately while sex is not considered

because study of reports show no changes over previous statements given in this regard.

In the Missouri group nine municipalities are recorded and the study embraces the consideration of morbidity amongst 6,130 children between the ages of six and eighteen which have in turn been divided into two groups of six to ten and ten to eighteen. In the last column the average between the reports from the state of Missouri and the city of Cleveland for the age group six to eighteen is given, negro children were not considered in the average.

A few comparisons between the white and negro statistics for Cleveland may be interesting. The respiratory diseases seem to be some less prevalent amongst the negroes while there is a marked tendency to measles amongst them, at the same time scarlet fever and small pox, etc., are less in frequency. Ringworm seems to be entirely peculiar to the black race in Cleveland. There are also more cases of tonsillitis amongst the negro children.

Comparison between Missouri and Cleveland shows some lessened percentage of cases of respiratory infection with marked increase in measles and mumps. The cases of influenza were included in the Cleveland report as respiratory diseases so the difference is probably thus accountable.

In the six to ten age group respiratory infections, measles, mumps, and influenza are the four outstanding causes of absences.; while in the 11-18 group respiratory infections increases while measles drops down more than one half; mumps increases and so does influenza. These latter increases are due to or made up mostly through decrease in the

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miscellaneous contagious diseases encountered especially prior to the age of ten years.

In Summary then from the data at our disposal I believe that we are safe in saying that the most important single cause of absence is respiratory infection. Second, as a group contagious diseases occupy the largest percentage. If I were to place the causes in their order with the approximate percentage it would be as follows:

Contagious diseases	50%
Respiratory Inf and Influen.	35
Eye, Ear, Nose & Throat	10
Digestive disturbances	2.5
Accident & Injury	1.
Pneumonia	2.

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TABLE NO. I

Affection	Cleveland Public Schools 22-23 Age 6-18			Missouri 6, 130 children. 1921			Average for White age 6-18	
	% of all days lost. white	% of all days lost. Negro	Both Races %	% age 6-18	% 6-10	% 11-18		
Resp. Inf. & Colds	47.2	41.0	45.4	32.5	28.4	41.0	39.8%	39.
Measles	13.0	18.2	14.5	23.5	28.6	12.9	18.2	
Scarlet Fever	11.6	3.5	9.3	7.5	8.2	6.0	9.5	
Chicken Pox	11.8	1.9	9.0	3.6	4.2	2.5	7.7	
Whooping Cough		5.6	1.6					
Diphtheria	1.	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.5	1.4	9.0	
Mumps	0.2		0.1	12.1	12.0	14.5	6.5	
Pertussis				4.4	6.3	0.3	4.0	
Small Pox				0.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	5.5
Tonsils (Dis.)	5.6	9.7	6.8	2.6	1.4	5.0	4.0	4
Miscellaneous	4.6	4.3	4.5	7.2	6.0	9.8	5.2	
Accident & Inj.	1.3	4.1	2.1				1.3	1.0
Digestive System	2.3	1.3	2.0				2.3	2.5
Ringworm		7.0	2.6					
Accident	0.2	1.5	0.6				0.2	
Teeth Diseases	0.5	0.6	0.5	2.3	1.6	3.8	1.4	
Ear	0.4	0.1.	0.3				0.4	
Eye	0.3		0.2				0.3	6.E.E.1.
Pneumonia				2.3	2.2	2.4	2.3	2.
Influenza				17.7	16.0	21.0	17.7	102.3

Absenteeism in the Public Schools Van Loan

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TABLE II

AMOUNT OF TIME LOST

Arbitrary average made having estimative value, only, and is thought to be the minimum rather than the maximum. The table was prepared through comparison and average of statistics from various schools studied.

Respiratory Infections	2.39 %
Gastro Intestinal Dis.	0.23
Contagious	0.08
Miscellaneous	0.57

Misc. includes those case with diag or not included in other classes.

TABLE IV

RACE AGE AND SEX CONSIDERED

The following report is taken from the statistics from the the schools of Cleveland.

	age 5-9	10-14	Days average duration of sickness. <i>in Days.</i>	
White				
Male	6.8	5.5		
Female	6.5	4.7	"	"
Negro				
Male	7.4	5.1	"	"
Female	6.7	4.4	"	"

The causes of absenteeism in the the public schools van loan

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TABLE NO. 3.

STATISTICS FROM SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONS AND ALSO
SHOWING SOME DIFFERENCE IN THE CLASS OF STUDENTS ATTENDING.

	Lincoln <i>6-18</i>	St. Paul <i>11-18</i>	Boys <i>Age 11-18</i>
RESPIRATORY Infections	41 %	73	52
CONTAGIOUS Diseases	25 %		
DIGESTIVE Disturbances	23 %	7	28
Influenza	3 %		
OTHER DISEASES	8 %	17	20

Legend:

The Lincoln School of the Teacher's College. The ages accounted in the above statistics for this school are 6-18 and the enrolment is about one hundred and fifty.

The St. Paul's school for boys is located at Concord Mass. The ages considered are from 11-18 and the enrolment is about one hundred and sixty five.

This is a boys school of which the name is not given. The number of students is about 115 and the ages are between 11 and 18.

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THE CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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THE GENERAL CAUSES OF ABSENTEEISM
IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS
(DAVIS)

Fault at home	29%
Dislike of school	26
Bad company	20
Fault of the boy	11
Desire to work	10
Illness	4
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TABLE II
SHOWING AMOUNT OF TIME LOST IN %
OF TOTAL POSSIBLE DAYS
ATTENDANCE.

Respiratory infections	2.39%
Gastro Intestinal Disorders	.23
Contagious Diseases	.08
Miscellaneous	.57
Sum	3.17

Miscellaneous includes those cases not diagnosed
or not included in the other classifications.

TABLE #III C
 RACE AGE AND SEX CONSIDERED : CLEVELAND.

Age	5-9	& 10-14	
White-male	6.8	5.5	The days average duration of sickness given in days.
female	6.5	4.7	
Negro-male	7.4	5.1	" "
female	6.7	4.4	" "

TABLE III D
 THREE INSTITUTIONS COMPARED

		Boys Lincoln	ST. PAUL	CONCORD BOYS
RESPIRATORY	AGE.	6-18	11-18	11-18
Infections		41%	73%	52%
CONTAGIOUS				
Diseases		25	--	--
DIGESTIVE				
Disturbances		23	7	28
OTHER DISEASES		8	17	20
INFLUENZA		3	--	--

Other diseases includes those not diagnosed or
 unknown..

Affection	Cleveland Public Missouri 6,130							Aver-
	Wh.	Ne.	Bo	6-18	6-10	11-18		age
Resp. Inf %	47.2	41.0	45.4	32.5	28.4	41.0	39.8	
Measles	13.0	18.2	14.5	23.5	28.6	12.9	18.2	for
Scarlet fever	11.6	3.5	9.3	7.5	8.2	6.0	9.5	white
Chicken Pox	11.8	1.9	9.0	3.6	4.2	2.5	7.7	only.
Whooping Cough	--	5.6	1.6	4.4	6.3	0.3	4.0	----
Diphtheria	1.0	1.2	1.1	0.8	0.5	1.4	9.0	The%
Mumps	0.2	---	0.1	12.1	12.0	14.5	6.5	is
Small Pox				0.5	0.6	0.4	0.5	of all
Tonsils E.E.T.	6.8	10.4	7.8	4.9	3.0	8.8	6.1	days
RINGworm		7.0	2.6					lost
Miscellaneous	4.6	4.3	4.5	7.2	6.0	9.8	5.2	due
Digestive System	2.3	1.3	2.0				2.3	to
Accident & Inj.	1.3	4.1	2.1	---	---	---	---	the
Pneumonia				2.3	2.2	2.4	2.3	affect
Influenza				17.7	16.0	21.0	17.7	ion.

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 PERCENTAGE CAUSES
 ABSENTEEISM SUMMARIZED.

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CONTAGIOUS DISEASES	50 %
RESPIRATORY INFECT. AND Inf.	35
EYE, EAR, NOSE & THROAT	10
DIGESTIVE DISTURBANCES	2.5
PNEUMONIA	1.