Allegations of Maltreatment and Delinquency: Does Risk of Juvenile Arrest vary Substantiation Status?

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Purpose

To determine if the risk of juvenile justice involvement differs between cases with substantiated or unsubstantiated allegations of maltreatment.

Background

1. The decision to substantiate an allegation of maltreatment is complicated and is driven by clinical issues, the consideration of physical evidence, reliability of a witnesses, determination of intentionality, consideration of community/cultural standards, and interpretation of statutes (Trocme, Knoke, Fallon, & MacLaurin, 2009) .

2. Debate exists as to whether or not substantiated and unsubstantiated cases vary with regard to the presence of risk factors (Leite, Myers, & Zingraff, 1994).

3. Prior research indicates that between 9% and 29 % of maltreated children have official contact with juvenile justice (Ryan, & Testa, 2005).

Research Questions

1. Do substantiated and unsubstantiated maltreatment cases have equal risk of juvenile arrest?
2. Do children who experienced placement instability have greater risk of juvenile arrest?
3. Do African American children in child welfare have greater risk of juvenile arrest?

Sample Selection

·Datasets include: administrative records from Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and Department of Probation in Los Angeles County.

·Child welfare records include all children (n = 352,765) involved with an allegation of maltreatment between 2002 and 2008. Delinquency records from Los Angeles County Department of Probation include all arrests (n = 451,954) for all minors (n = 171,928) in Los Angeles County between 2002 and 2008.

·Final sample includes 38,223 non-duplicated cases with an allegation in 2002. Propensity scoring (PSM) procedures were used to create one-to-one match for each child .

Measures

·Cases were divided into substantiated and unsubstantiated groups. Allegations with a finding of "inconclusive" were excluded.

·Placement instability recoded (1 removal, 2 removals, and 3 or more placements), juvenile arrest is a dummy variable.

·Our sample is limited to children between 5 and 16-yearsof age as 2002, so that each youth is eligible for an official juvenile arrest.

Sample Profile

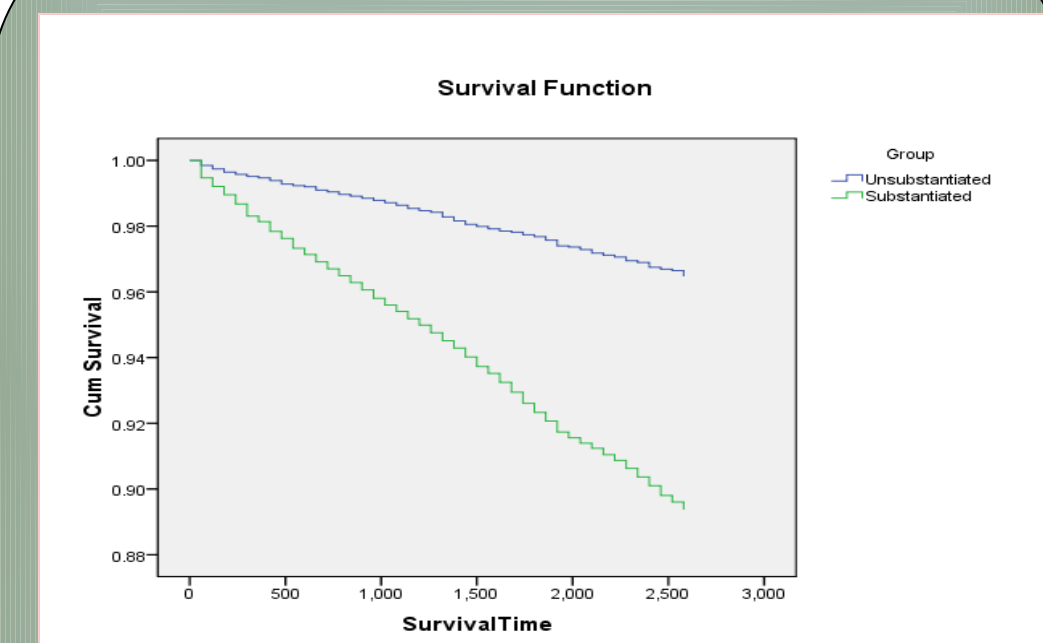| Variables	Intervention (Substantiated)	Comparison (Unsubstantiated)	Difference
Pre Match Sample (N= 38,223)			
Pscore	.3678	.2990	.688
	(N =12,273)	(N =25,950)	
Age	10.23	10.06	.17
Male	44.5%	49.5%	-5.0%
Race			
African American	21.1%	20.2%	0.9%
White	15.2%	17.6%	-2.4%
Hispanic	57.3%	59.3%	-2.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	6.1%	2.8%	3.3%
Other races	.3%	.2%	0.1%
Allegation			
Sexual abuse	9.5%	3.0%	6.5%
Physical abuse	15.5%	15.6%	-0.1%
Neglect	18.6%	28.3%	-9.7%
Emotional abuse	20.6%	13.7%	6.9%
Substantial risk	21.7%	33.4%	-11.7%
Other maltreatment	14.1%	6.0%	8.1%
Post Match Sample (N = 24,546)			
P-Score(After PSM)	.3678	.3584	.094
	(N =12,273)	(N =12,273)	
After PSM			
Age	10.23	10.17	.06
Male	44.5%	46.3%	-1.8%
Race			
African American	21.1%	21.9%	-0.8%
White	15.2%	15.2%	0.0%
Hispanic	57.3%	57.0%	0.3%
Asian/Pacific Islanders	6.1%	5.7%	0.4%
Other races	.3%	.3%	0.0%
Allegation			
Sexual abuse	9.5%	6.4%	3.1%
Physical abuse	15.5%	15.3%	0.2%
Neglect	18.6%	19.2%	-0.6%
Emotional abuse	20.6%	24.7%	-4.1%
Substantial risk	21.7%	21.8%	-0.1%
Other maltreatment	14.1%	12.6%	1.5%

Analytic Approach

·PSM is used to create 2 matched groups. Standard matching is used in which 1 treatment (substantiated) and 1 control (unsubstantiated) unit are paired. Analytic procedures begin with creating propensity scores that computes the likelihood of having a substantiated allegation of maltreatment.

·Because length of time for arrest varies case by case, we used Cox Regression, which examines the likelihood of an event occurring at a specific point in time, given that an individuals are at risk for various lengths of time

Findings

1. Relative risk ratio of arrest rate is 2.2 times greater for substantiated cases as compared with unsubstantiated cases of maltreatment.

2. Older children have greater risk of arrest and males are almost 2 times more likely to be associated with at least one subsequent arrest. African American youth are also more likely to experience at least one arrest as compared with White, Hispanic, or Asian youth.

3. Six types of maltreatment are categorized in our study (sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, substantial risks and other maltreatment). Relative risk ratio of arrest rate is 0.6 times for sexual abuse, 0.8 times for neglect, 0.7 times for emotional abuse and 0.7 times for substantial risk compared to "other types of maltreatment." 4. Children removed from their home were 2.3 times as likely to experience at least one juvenile arrest. This risk increased as adolescent moved between various out-of-home placements (2.6 times for 2 removals; 3.9 time foe 3 and more removals).

5. Compared to children without a subsequent allegations (recurrence), youth experiencing at least one additional allegation (substantiated or otherwise) were significantly more likely to experience an arrest.

Predicting Arrest Rate

Survival Function

Independent variables	Risk Ratios/Arrest rate
Child demographics	
Age in 2002	1.379***
Gender	
Female	-
Male	1.850***
Ethnicity	
African American	-
White	.487***
Hispanic	.640***
Asian/Pacific Islander	.446**
Other races	1.176
Type of maltreatment allegation	
Sexual abuse	.600***
Physical abuse	.919
Neglect	.831*
Emotional abuse	.739**
Substantial risk	.692***
Other maltreatment	-
Placement removals	
Non removal	-
One removal	2.311***
Two removals	2.587***
Three or more removals	3.828***
Subsequent Allegation	
No allegation	-
Substantiated	1.910***
Unsubstantiated	1.491***
Inconclusive	1.472***
Maltreatment Allegation	
Unsubstantiated	-
Substantiated	2.213***
Reference category for contrasts	p *<.05;** p<.01, *** p<.001

Conclusions

1. Substantiation does matter when modeling the risk of juvenile justice involvement. Children and adolescents with a substantiated allegation of maltreatment are significantly more likely to experience at least one juvenile arrests as compared with similar children associated with only an unsubstantiated report of maltreatment.

2. Placement instability is associated with a significant increase in the risk of juvenile arrest. Despite consistency with prior research, it is unclear whether placement increases the risk of delinquency directly or is a response to seriously inadequate investments made by parents in the care, education, and supervision of individual youth.

3. African American youth in child welfare are significantly more likely to experience at least one arrest, as compared with Hispanic, white and Asian youth.

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