



The Relationship Between Type of Social Support Students Receives Outside of School and Skipping School.



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Introduction

- High rates of school absences are predictors for academics and socioeconomic instability.
- Chronic truancy often is a byproduct of a student's social rather than a personal student's issue.
- Literature establishes parental involvement is a factor in better attendance (Morrissey et al., 2014); but there is a gap in understanding how non-parental adult figures (coaches, community leaders) compare as protective factors against truancy.
- The network of social support students have outside the classroom is key to a student's academic outcome and engagement. (Ricard & Pelletier, 2016)
- Students lacking adult support are more likely to fall into academic frustration and dropout. (Fall & Roberts, 2012).

Research Questions

- Does the primary source of social support significantly influence the number of days an adolescent skips school?
- Does the relationship between social support and school absences remain significant when controlling for factors like family income and sex?

Methods

Sample

The analysis used a subset of the 2024 NSDUH consisting of adolescents aged 12–17 currently enrolled in school (n = 8,034 responses).

Measures

- Dependent Variable: School absenteeism- measured as number of days skipped in the past 30 days.
- Independent Variable: Support type from self-reports about who the student turn to for a serious problem. Support was categorized into: Parental/Guardian, Other Adult, Significant Other, Some Other Person, None and NA.
- A bivariate ANOVA examined mean differences between groups. A multivariate linear regression model used to control for Family Income and Biological Sex.
- Family Income coded into socioeconomic levels (Less than \$20k, \$20k - \$49,999, \$50k - \$74,999, and \$75k or More) to control for the impact of financial stability on school attendance.
- Analysis used sex as control variable to see possible differences in skipping between male and female students.

Results

Bivariate

- The ANOVA was significant ($F = 23.19$, $p < 0.001$), showing that type of social support significantly impacts skipping.
- Means and Post-Hoc Tests: Adolescents with Parental support skipped the fewest days ($m = 0.91$), those with No support ($m = 1.91$) or Significant Other as primary support ($m = 1.95$) skipped twice as many days. Parental support was more protective than having no support ($\text{diff} = -0.99$, $p < 0.001$) or relying on other adults ($\text{diff} = -0.65$, $p = 0.002$).

Multivariate

- In the full regression model, Parental support remained a predictor for lower absences ($p = 1.65e-10$). Additionally, being Male ($p = 1.48e-06$) and having an income Less than \$20k ($p = 0.031$) were significantly associated with an increase in skipped days.
- The stratified bar plots shows that the protective effect of parental support is consistent across all family income levels.
- "Other Adult" group shows higher variability in lower-income brackets.

Discussion

- Findings: Parental support is the most effective protective factor against absenteeism,
 - Parental support students skipped nearly one full day less per month than those with no support system.
- Impact: Schools should focus on "adult" mentorship programs for students lacking parental structures to provide the support for school engagement.
- Revised Limitation: This study utilizes self-reported data, which may cause social desirability bias where students underreport the amount of their absences.
- Consistency: Multivariate regression confirms that the influence of parental support remains a significant predictor regardless of family income or biological sex.
- Future studies should research the quality of support provided by non-parental adults to determine how or if these relationships were less effective than parental support in reducing absenteeism.

References

- Fall, A.-M., & Roberts, G. (2012). High school dropouts: Interactions between social context, self-perceptions, school engagement, and student dropout. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35(4), 787–798. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2011.11.004>
- Morrissey, T. W., Hutchison, L., & Winsler, A. (2014). Family income, school attendance, and academic achievement in elementary school. *Developmental Psychology*, 50(3), 741–753. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033848>
- Ricard, N. C., & Pelletier, L. G. (2016). Dropping out of high school: The role of parent and teacher self-determination support, reciprocal friendships and academic motivation. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 44–45, 32–40. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cedpsych.2015.12.003>

Mean Absences by Support Type Stratified by Total Family Income

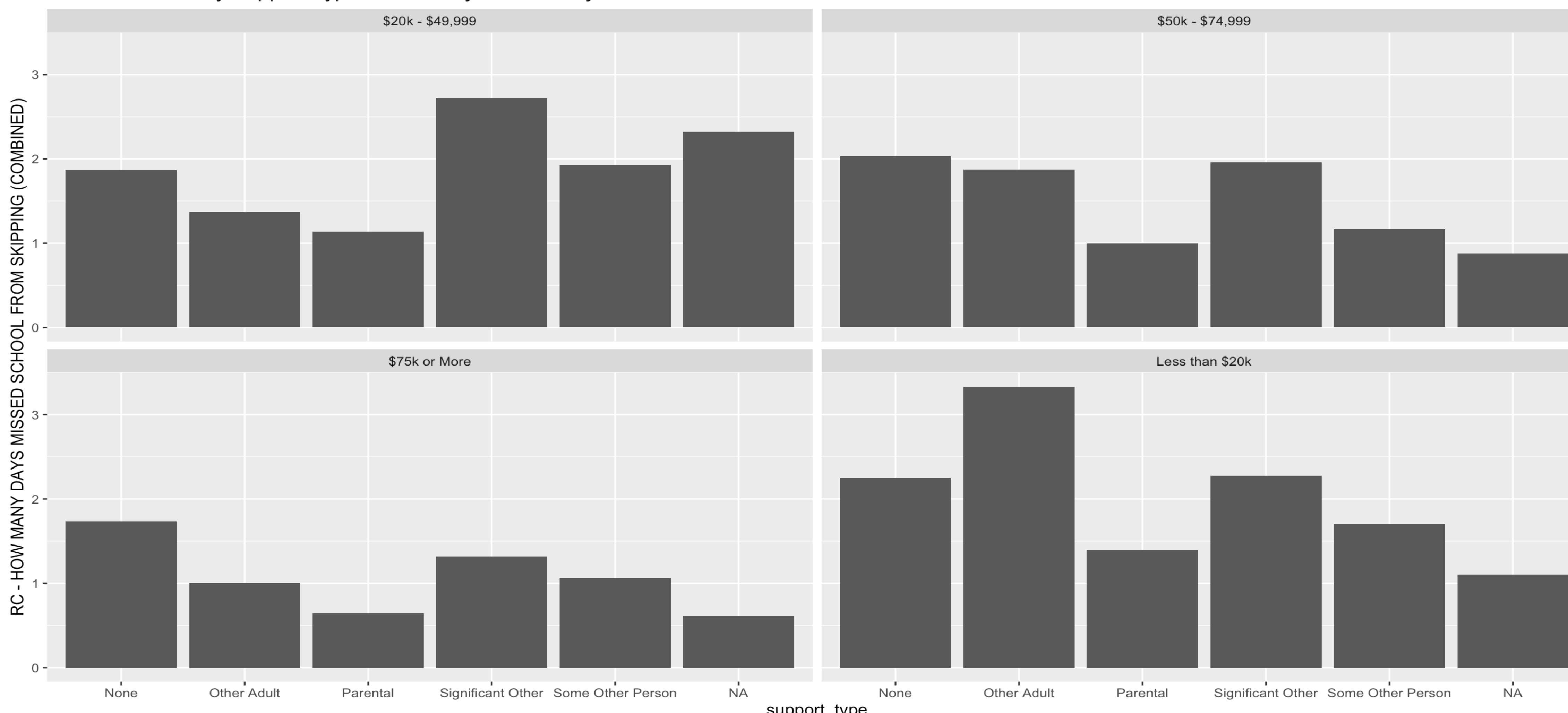


Figure 1: This chart shows the avg. number of days students (ages 12–17) reported skipping school in the past month. For all income levels, students who identified a Parental figure as their main support showed lowest rates of absences, while those relying on Significant Others or reporting No Support showed the highest frequency of skipping school.