



Maternal educational disadvantage and children's academic outcomes - the Irish case

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Introduction

- Significant decline in reading and mathematics scores among 15 year olds, 2000-09 (Perkins et al., 2011).
- Question: What variables explain negative outcomes in children's educational attainment over time and what role is played by maternal educational disadvantage?
- Growing Up in Ireland : Wave 1 + 2 data



Literature

- Maternal education: important indicator of children's academic performance.
- Mothers: main care provider
- More educated mothers spend more time, providing a stimulating home environment necessary for academic advancement (Guryan, Hurst & Kearney, 2008)



Literature

- Not all children from materially poor homes are disadvantaged in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes to school
- Long-term poverty may make children more vulnerable in the educational system (Black et al., 2005; Chevalier et al., 2011; Björklund & Salvanes, 2010)
- 1980's: income and occupation most closely related to children's scholastic achievements figures
- 1990's: mothers' education single best socioeconomic predictor of student performance (McMillan et al, 1995 in Kellaghan, Weir, O'hUallachain & Morgan, 1995)



Research Design

- Question:

What variables explain negative outcomes in children's educational attainment over time and what role is played by maternal educational disadvantage?

- Quantitative data analysis of GUI's merged data of 9 and 13 year olds
- Main focus on children and the sub sample of primary care givers who are biological mothers
- Measures taken from school-based components and the primary carer questionnaire



Research Design

Three types of analyses were carried out:

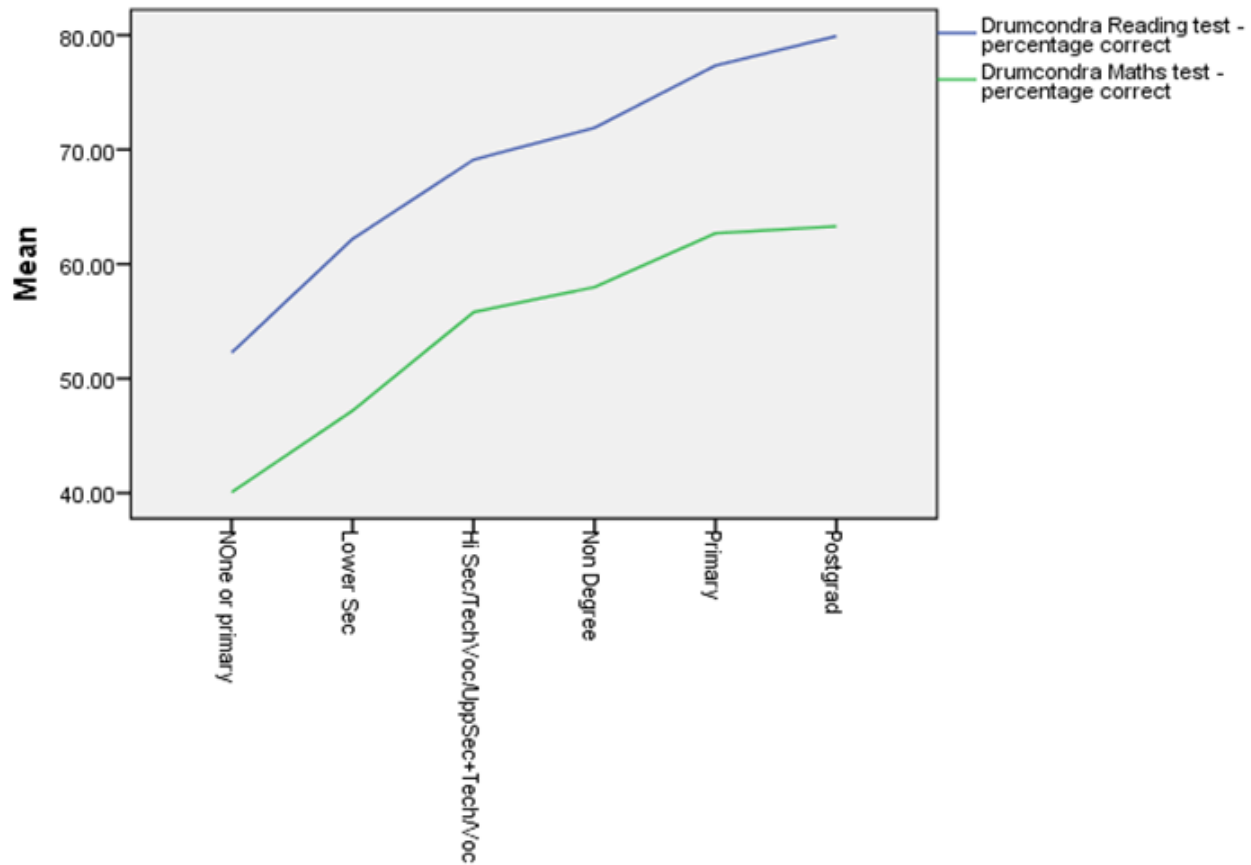
- Univariate (descriptives),
- Bivariate (correlations) and
- Multivariate (multiple regression)

Analysing predictors of child outcomes:

- Dependent Variable: Children's Academic outcome measured by Drumcondra Standardised Testing
- Independent Variables: Maternal Age, Household Type, Social Class, Neighbourhood Deprivation, Consistent Poverty, Maternal Education



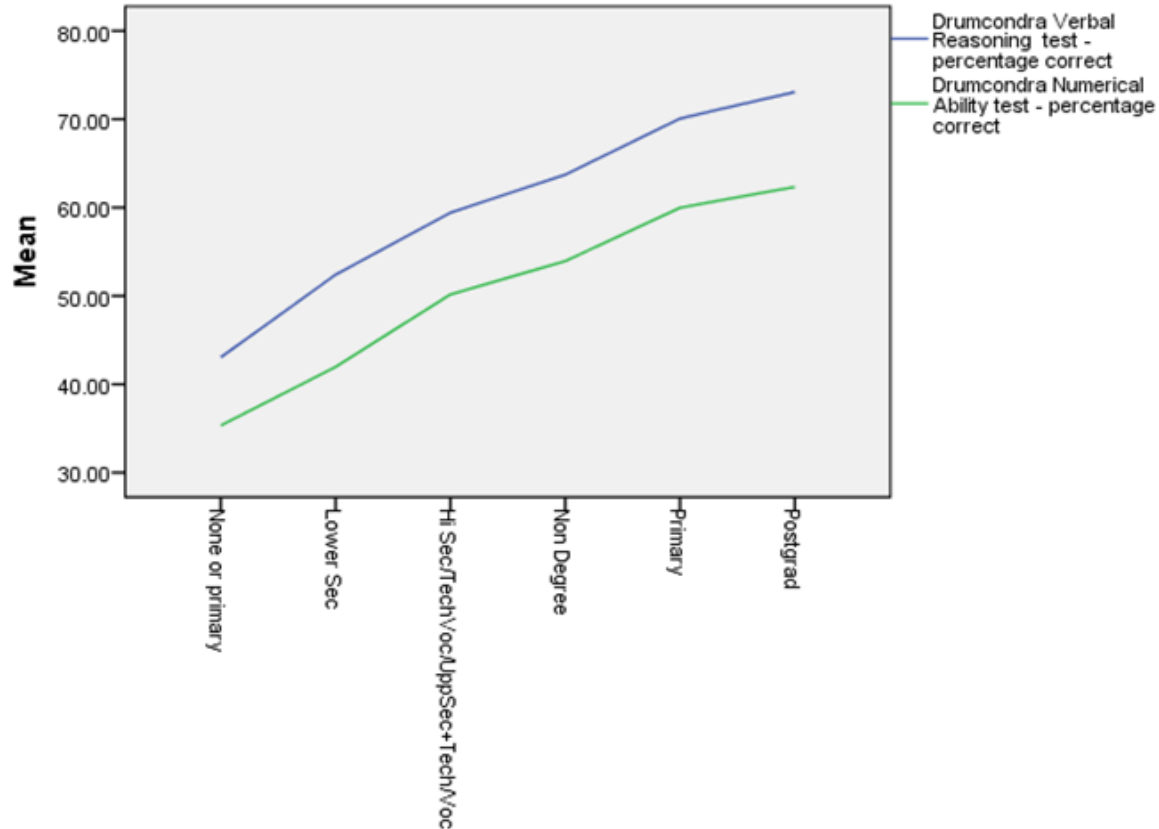
Maternal education and children's academic outcome (Children aged 9)



What is the highest level of education you have completed to date



Maternal education and children's academic outcome (Children age 13)



What is the highest level of education (full-time or part-time) which you have completed



Findings (Wave 1 + 2)

- Maternal education strongest predictor for children's academic outcomes, above and beyond the contribution of demographic and income/deprivation related variables
- Maternal education AND maternal age more relevant for reading and verbal reasoning than maths and numerical ability
- Relevance, particularly for reading, remains over time regardless of additional formal schooling at age 13 and the possibility of mothers' educational upskilling



Findings continued

- Positive effects of larger family size on maths and numerical skills
- Effect of families on child outcomes may be greater than the effect of other contextual factors such as neighbourhood and community
- Negative association between middle social class and attainment in both maths and reading at age 9, which decreased at age 13.
- Lower social class negatively related in terms of numeracy skills.