

ABSTRACT

The Determinants of Attendance at Primary, All-Age and Secondary Schools in Jamaica

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Low attendance rates retard the efforts of educational institutions to effectively and uniformly deliver the life skills and knowledge that are necessary for the development of the all-important human resources in a developing nation. With this concern in mind, the present paper utilizes a data set drawn from the November 1990 round of the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions to explain two separate aspects of attendance, namely days of attendance (a continuous variable) and full attendance (a categorical variable). Regression results from four different estimating techniques — the Classical Linear Regression, Linear Probability, and Probit and Logit Models — show that possession of textbooks, school type, illness, average time taken to arrive at school (proxy for distance), region and quintile membership are very important determinants of attendance at schools in Jamaica. When samples are separated into Primary and All-Age Schools, on one hand, and Secondary Schools on the other, it is found that, for the latter, apart from school type and quintile membership, the other variables pale into insignificance, with a new variable, the provision of meals at school, emerging as significant and negative. One of the several policy implications derived here, is the compelling need to improve student welfare, particularly in rural areas, if the factors militating against regular attendance are to subside.