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DETERMINANTS OF POVERTY AMONG MEXICAN MIGRANTS IN CHICAGO

Abstract:

This paper examines the connection between immigration status, English language proficiency, educational achievement, time in the U.S., and economic sector of employment as determinants of poverty among Mexico-born migrants in Chicago, U.S. The theoretical framework of the study uses Human Capital Theory and the analysis is based on a multi-stage cluster probabilistic sample (2005-2006) of Mexican migrants obtained in Cook County which includes the City of Chicago. Analyses of logistic regression models show that the most relevant connections occur between poverty (dependent variable) and immigration status, time in the U.S., economic sector of employment, and English language proficiency. Thus, Mexican immigrants with citizenship status or residency permits ("green cards") and Mexican immigrants with English language proficiency have a lower probability to be below the poverty threshold than their counterparts. Furthermore, female migrants, older migrants, and the unemployed or out of the labor force have a higher probability to be poor than their counterparts. The analysis of the sample's educational achievement in Mexico shows that these migrants tend to have low levels of education. Similarly, the educational achievement obtained in the U.S. is significantly low among the individuals in the sample. These results point to the plight of the large levels of undocumented workers with low English proficiency and suggest the existence of structural problems that impede significant returns to human capital investments on Mexican education in the U.S. labor market.

Keywords:

Poverty, Language, Education, Mexican Migrants

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