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Short-term and medium-term effects of grade retention in secondary school on academic achievement and psychosocial outcome variables.

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Summary: The objective of this paper was to examine how grade retention in secondary school would affect students' academic achievement and psychosocial adjustment. Moreover, we investigated short-term and medium-term effects of grade retention on students' outcomes. Propensity score matching was used to select a control group of promoted students who were similar to the retained students on a variety of characteristics. Furthermore, we used a type of comparison by which the outcome variables of the retained and promoted students were compared at different times while the grade and age-cohort were held equal between groups. We found three major results. With respect to school marks as an indicator of students' academic achievement, this study showed that retaining students resulted in short-term benefits for the retained students but that the matched promoted students performed equally well in the medium-term. The results of standardized achievement tests additionally indicated that the students who were retained did not differ significantly from the students who were promoted. Regarding psychosocial outcomes, students differed only in self-concept (favouring the promoted students) but not in other ratings.

Classification: C30 C20

Keywords: grade retention; secondary school; academic achievement; psychosocial outcomes; short-term and medium-term effects

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