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| **Associations between adolescent health risk behaviours or protective factors and school attendance in three South American nations** |
| **Background/Objectives**Around the world, health and education outcomes are recognized by the field of public health as two of the most important measures of the development of nations and the well-being of their populations. Risk and protective factors can have important influences on school attendance and resulting completion of studies. The purpose of this exploratory study is to determine associations between health risk behaviours and protective factors and student attendance in school in nations where these relationships have not yet been well described.**Methods**The countries of interest include Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru. Data sources are the Global School-based Student Health Survey (GSHS) administrations held in 2010 (Peru) and 2012 (Argentina and Bolivia). The outcome variable is missing school without permission 3 or more days during the past 30 days. Seventeen independent risk factors and 11 protective factors met analysis criteria. Phi coefficient correlations and logistic regression were employed to determine associations.**Results**Data analyses for each country revealed important associations between risk and protective factors and school attendance. While individual independent variables were not strongly correlated with the outcome variable when measured with the Phi coefficient correlation method, a large majority displayed some relationship. These relationships were typically oriented in expected directions. Risk variables appeared to contribute to missing school 3 or more times during the past 30 days while protective factors negatively influenced absences. Logistic regression analyses for Argentina and Peru revealed a large number of risk and protective factors that independently affected the outcome variable.**Discussion**Results offer numerous options for policy and practice intervention and further research. Leveraging the school (institutions and organizations), community, and structures and systems levels of the Social Ecological Model can provide opportunities for interventions that will positively affect individual and interpersonal outcomes measured by the GSHS. Policy and practice initiatives in school systems can be sparked by understanding the importance and influence of risk and protective factors with youth.**Keywords**Health and student attendance, school health, adolescent health, adolescent risk behaviours, healthy schools, schools in South America. |