

Income support and its effect on the need for child protection services

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The financial difficulties of families can manifest in different ways and in this research we focus on child protection services. While poverty alone does not explain the need for child protection, it is nevertheless a key factor connecting social risks and family problems. For example, mental health problems and substance abuse are often also related to poverty.

In our previous studies, we have found that supplementary income support can alleviate the need for child protection services at the municipal level. In that, the more supplementary income support is used in the municipality, the fewer child welfare notifications there are. Child welfare notifications are an important factor for predicting children's out-of-home placements, so in this sense the buffer effect of supplementary income support is a significant factor.

In this presentation, we compare the different sizes of a sample of 294 municipalities in more detail, in terms of how much they use supplementary income support in relation to basic income support recipients. Our presentation is based on a descriptive funnel plot analysis, which can be used to identify municipalities whose higher/lower use of supplementary income support is based on factors other than statistical random variation. The analysis shows that supplementary income support is used more in smaller than in large municipalities. In the presentation, we address possible factors that could explain the greater use of supplementary income support by small municipalities.

The rationale of the presentation is based on the notion that the municipality-level variation in accessibility to benefits puts citizens in an unequal position, relative to which municipality they live in. Equality is a key principle in the Nordic countries, where this study is based, so its violation is a crucial issue in terms of the political and legal basis of social welfare services in the future.