

“Sick but I am working”: A Comparison of Presenteeism in Immigrant and Autochthonous Workers in Spain

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Background: Immigration is a complex phenomenon that changes the demographic profile of the immigrant and native working population and that generates an interest in the study of inequalities in occupational and health conditions. We aim to compare rates of sickness presenteeism in immigrant and Spanish-born workers according to different variables.

Methods: A cross-sectional survey (n=2,350) was conducted amongst a non-random sample of workers (43% women- 78% immigrants), born in Spain (SP) and foreign-born (FB) from Ecuador, Morocco, Romania and Colombia, living in four Spanish cities: Barcelona, Huelva, Madrid and Valencia (2008-2009). The survey examined the demographic, working and health conditions of participants. The variable Presenteeism was evaluated through the question: *-have you ever had to miss work for any health problems in the last year?-* (negative response was considered Presenteeism). Logistic regressions were used to establish association between origin country and sickness presenteeism (adjusted odds ratios aOR; 95% confidence interval 95%CI) adjusted for sex, age, education, type of contract and income (per month).

Results: 2059 participants reported health problems in the last year. The prevalence and the probability of presenteeism were higher in FB [Prev: 52.2%; aOR 1.40 CI95% 1.13- 1.75].

According to different variables, FB men [aOR 1.53 CI95% 1.13-1.07], FB without studies/primary studies [aOR 1.87 CI95% 1.16- 3.02], FB with temporary contracts and FB with salaries between 751-1200€ [aOR 1.52 CI95% 1.09- 2.12] were all more likely to report presenteeism.

Conclusions: Immigrant workers seem to report more sickness presenteeism than Spanish-born workers. This situation may be explained in part by the existence of precarious employment and working conditions among foreign- born groups in the host society.