

## ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: ASSESSING THE ROLE OF HEARING IMPAIRMENTS AND SOCIOECONOMIC DISPARITIES IN GRADE RETENTION DURING THE COVID-19 ERA

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This study investigates the predictors of grade retention among school-aged children, with a focus on the role of hearing impairments, socioeconomic status, and demographic factors, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Using data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) 2017-2022, logistic regression models were employed to analyze the effects of these variables. Significant predictors of grade retention were identified, including hearing impairments (OR = 2.20,  $p < 0.001$ ), older age (12-17 years, OR = 1.67,  $p < 0.001$ ), and lower income levels. In addition, females were found to have lower odds of retention compared to males (OR = 0.70,  $p < 0.001$ ). The COVID-19 period was associated with a decrease in retention likelihood (OR = 0.78,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting policy changes during the pandemic may have influenced educational outcomes. The study concludes that while the pandemic influenced overall retention rates, comprehensive policies and targeted support are needed to address the systemic factors contributing to grade retention.