

Administrative Data and Child Welfare Research: A Comprehensive Analysis

Administrative data is a valuable resource for child welfare research, providing insights into the system and outcomes of interventions. This article reviews the types, strengths, weaknesses, and ethical considerations related to using administrative data in child welfare research.



Administrative Data and Child Welfare Research: Using Linked Data to Improve Child Welfare Research, Policy, and Practice

by Donald P. Gregg

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Types of Administrative Data

Administrative data is data that is collected as part of the day-to-day operations of an organization or agency. In child welfare, this can include data from:

- Case management systems

- Child abuse and neglect hotlines
- Foster care and adoption databases
- Juvenile justice records
- Educational records
- Health records

Administrative data can be a rich source of information for researchers, as it can provide longitudinal data on children and families over time. This data can be used to track outcomes, identify risk and protective factors, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Strengths of Administrative Data

Administrative data has a number of strengths that make it a valuable resource for child welfare research:

- **Large sample sizes:** Administrative data can provide access to large samples of children and families, which increases the statistical power of research studies.
- **Longitudinal data:** Administrative data can be collected over time, which allows researchers to track outcomes and identify trends.
- **Low cost:** Administrative data is often available at a low cost, making it a feasible option for researchers with limited budgets.
- **Validity:** Administrative data is generally considered to be valid, as it is collected as part of the routine operations of an organization or agency.

Weaknesses of Administrative Data

Despite its strengths, administrative data also has some weaknesses that researchers should be aware of:

- **Missing data:** Administrative data may be missing data on some variables, which can limit the scope of research studies.
- **Inaccuracy:** Administrative data may contain errors or inaccuracies, which can affect the validity of research findings.
- **Confidentiality:** Administrative data is often confidential, which can make it difficult to obtain and use for research purposes.

Ethical Considerations

There are a number of ethical considerations that researchers must take into account when using administrative data in child welfare research:

- **Confidentiality:** Researchers must ensure that the privacy of children and families is protected when using administrative data.
- **Informed consent:** Researchers should obtain informed consent from children and families before using their data for research purposes.
- **Data security:** Researchers must ensure that administrative data is stored and used in a secure manner.

Administrative data is a valuable resource for child welfare research.

However, researchers should be aware of the strengths, weaknesses, and ethical considerations related to using this type of data.

By carefully considering these factors, researchers can use administrative data to conduct rigorous and meaningful research that can improve the lives of children and families.

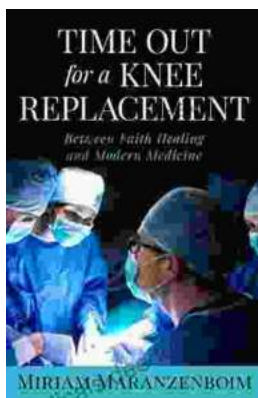


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