Abstract

Studies on autism spectrum disorder(ASD) have utilized income as a side variable, but have yet to examine income-related disparities as a central variable. The aim of this study is to determine the presence and patterns of income-related and racial disparities in service utilization among children with ASD. Data from the National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) from 2016-2018 was used. Income was defined as a percentage of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Weighted logistic regressions were used for statistical modeling. 2.3% of children ages 3-17 were identified with ASD from 2016 to 2018. Within the children with ASD, the prevalence was non-uniformly distributed by income and by race. Stratifying by income, the average prevalence ratios for the 0-99% FPL, 100-199% FPL, 200-399% FPL, and >400% FPL groups were 3.1%, 2.6%, 2.1%, and 1.7% respectively. By race, the average prevalence ratios Hispanics, Non-Hispanic Whites, Non-Hispanic Blacks, and Non-Hispanic Multi-racial/Others were 2.7%, 2.1%, 2.5%, and 1.9% respectively. After controlling for other variables, lower income was associated with less utilization of services but higher prevalence. Furthermore, Whites were associated with lower prevalence, but had the highest rates of service utilization. There are significant income-related and racial disparities in diagnosis and service utilization for ASD, which may be potentially based on changes in legislature and awareness of ASD throughout the years.