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Demographic and socioeconomic factors associated with under-5 mortality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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2016

http://hdl.handle.net/10539/21962

Hlongwa, Mbuzeleni N. (2016) Demographic and socioeconomic factors associated with under-5 mortality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/handle/10539/21962>

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ABSTRACT

BACKGROUND: Under-5 children in KwaZulu-Natal are highly exposed to dying before reaching five years of life. Studies have been conducted to understand the demographic and socioeconomic factors that influence under-5 mortality, both nationally and internationally, with some contradicting findings on the association between some socioeconomic and demographic factors and under-5 mortality. While some studies found child mortality to be significantly associated with rural geographical place of residence, the reverse has also been established. The purpose of this study was to examine the association between socioeconomic and demographic factors and under-5 mortality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

DESIGN: The study was cross-sectional, and utilises 2011 Census secondary data set from Statistics SA. Overall, the census revealed that 55 476 children under the age of 5 had died in the 12 months prior to the census nationally. In KwaZulu-Natal this figure was 15 356. The 10% sample showed that 1 474 under-5 children had died in the same period in KwaZulu-Natal. STATA 12.0 was used for the analysis. Binary logistic regression model was used to examine the association between under-5 mortality and the independent variables.

RESULTS: The major findings of the study indicated that (i) male children were 1.22 times more likely to die compared to female children under the age of 5 years; (ii) mothers who had no schooling (AOR=1.82); mothers with primary level of education (AOR=2.43); and mothers with secondary level of education (AOR=1.77), were more likely to experience under-5 mortality compared to mothers with tertiary level education; (iii) mothers whose age at first birth was between 15-19 years (AOR=1.47) and those whose age at first birth was between 25-34 years (AOR=2.14) were more likely to experience under-5 mortality compared to mothers whose age at first birth was between 35-49 years; (iv) Black mothers were more likely to experience under-5 mortality compared to Indian mothers (AOR=5.99); (v) mothers who were employed were 1.22 times more likely to experience under-5 mortality compared to unemployed mothers. Lastly, under-5 mortality was less likely amongst mothers in the medium households compared to those from low income households (AOR=0.65).

CONCLUSION: This study found that socioeconomic and demographic factors substantively determine under-5 mortality in KwaZulu-Natal. Evidence from this study suggest that interventions aimed at reducing under-5 mortality should focus on black women, the younger women, the less educated and those with low household income.

KEYWORDS: Under-5 mortality – Socioeconomic factors – Demographic factors - Education level - Employment status – Age of child – Sex of child – Maternal age – Place of residence – Annual household income.