

ABSTRACT

Background: Young fatherhood has been observed to occur in high, middle and low income countries and contribute to the global problem of early parenting. Young fatherhood does not only affect the individual, child or partner but also the different spheres in society at large. Research has shown that young fathers also experience negative social and health outcomes resulting from early parenting. These negative consequences are but not limited to being an absent father, school drop-out or poor school performance, increased risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and STIs, and high unemployment.

Objectives: The first objective of this study was to identify the levels of young fathers across the select demographic and socioeconomic factors in South Africa. Lastly, to examine the selected demographic and socioeconomic factors associated with young fatherhood in South Africa.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study that analysed secondary data from the South African National HIV Prevalence, HIV Incidence, Behaviour and Communication Survey (SABSSM) conducted in 2008 and 2012. The study had a weighted sample size of 365, 845 young fathers and a study population of 4,474,345 young males aged 15-24. The analyses approach was in two fold; bivariate and multivariate analysis. The bivariate analyses addressed the first objective using chi-square cross tabulation. The last objective was analysed using binary logistic regression for the multivariate analysis.

Results: The proportion of young fathers in South Africa varied across the nine (9) provinces, with a majority residing in the Western Cape (20%) and Gauteng (18%). The percentage of young fathers by place of residence was high in urban areas (75%) compared to 25% in rural areas. The highest proportion of young fathers (52%) were unemployed while only 12% were still at school and 36% were employed. Controlling for other characteristics, the unadjusted regression analysis on employment status showed that young males who were still at school are more likely to become a young father than young males who were unemployed. While young males who are employed were less likely to be a young father when compared to young males who were unemployed. The unadjusted logistic regression found that young males from the Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal were more likely to become a young father

when compared to young males from the Western Cape. The association for the other provinces was not statistically significant.

Conclusion: The study findings have established which demographic and socioeconomic determinants are associated with being a young father in South Africa. The overall conclusion that can be drawn from this study is; young fathers in South Africa are confronted by various challenges such as poor educational attainment, unemployment and lack of condom use.

Keywords: *Young fathers, young fatherhood, early parenting and South Africa*