



## Chapter 22

# Influence of Some Sociodemographic Factors on Causes of Death Among South African Youth

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### ABSTRACT

*Youth mortality is a challenge in South Africa, where on a daily basis a number of deaths are reported and are related to youth. This study used the 2014 Statistics South Africa data to examine the influence of sociodemographic factors on causes of death among South African youth aged 15-34 years, using a logistic regression model. The results showed that there is a significant relationship between education and causes of death as well as other sociodemographic factors and that the youth mortality will likely reduce if more youth have higher levels of education. The results of this study could be used to improve national prevention campaigns to reduce death among young South Africans, especially adolescents.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

South Africa's National Youth Policy (NYP) (2009-2014) defines youth as persons between the age category of 15 and 34 years. According to the mid-year population estimates 2016 produced by Stats SA there is an overall of 42% of young people in South Africa that there has been an improvement in the living conditions of these youth. The youth are now having access to water, housing and sanitation, and are technologically advanced; nevertheless, the high youth unemployment rate, high HIV infection rate as well as the growing number of households that are headed by young people is still some of the significant challenges that they have to grapple with. The education of the youth is also of paramount importance, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, is aiming at ensuring that all people have access to education. The World Health Organisation asserts that health is one of the key focus areas of the 2030 Agenda. Within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and with special reference to SDG 3, health and well-being for all peoples of a nation receive special emphasis as a global action item. On the other hand, the African Youth Charter (2006) also emphasises that every young person should have the right to education of good quality and the right to enjoy the best attainable state of health physically, mentally and spiritually. Education level of the nation remains the most vital factor in the absence of cure for some of the diseases. According to Statistics South Africa, Statistical release P0309.3 (2015) there are basically two types of causes of death, namely natural causes or non-natural as certified by medical practitioners. Natural causes are often attributed to an illness or underlying malfunctioning of the body and non-natural causes refers to deaths that are not natural such as accidents, suicide, and so forth. The study focuses on the causes of death of the youth of South Africa and their education level. The study is aimed at determining whether a relationship exists between the two variables.

## **BACKGROUND**

According to Statistics South Africa, Statistical release P0211.4.2 (2015), there was an improvement in the employment levels for the youth as about 44.5% of them are employed. It was noted that one out of every two young people who were unemployed and seeking employment only had education below matriculation. Borode (2011) suggests that the higher education curriculum in Sub-Saharan African countries should be amended so as to deal with the effects of the current education and training curriculum which have led to the observed high levels of unemployment. He asserts that the drive should focus on training in relevant scarce skills to ensure job market readiness. Higher education should be directed at producing graduates that are relevant to the economy, who would apply the acquired knowledge and skills to shape the economy and create jobs, rather than seeking for job opportunities as employees versus being entrepreneurs and employers.

The United Nations (UN, 2016) factsheet on youth and education established that education attainment can be used to reduce poverty and hunger, and also to promote sustainable developments in the world. UN further reports that globally, about 10.6% of the youth are uneducated and lack basic numerical and reading skills. As a result; there is high unemployment rate among the youth, since many do not have sufficient knowledge and skill to apply for decent jobs. The resultant inequality deters development amongst the youth. Over the years in all OECD and partner countries, there has being an increase in the levels of educational attainment. It was reported that 80% of young adults had education up to secondary level in 2000 in about 20 out of 35 OECD members. In 2016 the OECD countries on the average had 84% of the

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