

Determinants of Childhood Mortality in South Africa: Using Categorical Data Modeling

Kwabena A. Kyei

*Department of Statistics, University of Venda, Private Bag X5050,
Thohoyandou 0950, South Africa
E-mail: Kyei61@gmail.com*

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ABSTRACT Childhood mortality is of great interest to social scientists and policy makers concerned about the quality of life in less developed countries. Thus, the importance of the study of childhood mortality cannot be exaggerated. The levels of infant and child mortality are the two sensitive and widely used indicators of socio-economic development. The childhood mortality rate is a refined and sensitive index of the total cultural milieu of a community or a country. It reflects among other things, the state of public health and hygiene, the environmental sanitation, cultural mores about feeding and clothing, socio-economic development, and above all, the people's attitude towards the dignity and value of human life itself. It is the simple statistical index which conveys the idea of whether environmental hazards are controlled effectively or not, in developing countries, especially in Africa. The childhood mortality situation in South Africa has been investigated in this research using South African Demographic and Health Survey II data. About ten socio-economic, demographic, environmental and health-related variables were analyzed using categorical data modeling (catmod) analysis. On the basis of the analysis, the study concludes that education of parents, marital status as well as the occupation of mother, the survival of the penultimate child, duration of breastfeeding, anti-natal check-ups and availability of toilets in the residence are the determinants of childhood mortality in South Africa.