

# **EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN URBAN SLUMS OF JOHANNESBURG: DOES WHERE CHILDREN LIVES MATTER?**

## **BACKGROUND**

The most crucial development phase throughout lifespan is during early childhood period; which influences biological and behavioural process (Barros et al., 2009; Irwini et al, 2007). Families, social structures and cultural values within the society influences children's development (Barros et al., 2009). Early childhood development lay foundation for physical, emotional, and intellectual wellbeing (Walker et al., 2011). The surrounding environment has a vital impact on the way that children brain develop; they play, explore their surrounding environment, and learn how to speak and listen to others during their early years (Irwini et al., 2007). Children who reside in poor household in urban areas are devoid of basic rights of survival and development (Ambey et al., 2013). In the developing countries, children are exposed to various risks; which include poverty, malnutrition, and poor health (GranthamMcGregor et al., 2007). This affect their cognitive and social development (Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). In 2007, an estimate of over 200 million children younger than 5 years from low-income and middle-income countries were not attaining their developmental potential (Walker et al., 2011). In South Africa, poverty and inequality impact the livelihood of children, nearly 34% of children lives in poorest and crowded households (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007; Hall et al., 2014). These children are vulnerable (Du Plessis & Conley, 2007).

## **OBJECTIVE**

In the urban slums, households are characterised by low socio-economic status; researches show that children are at risk of not fully developing the necessary skills such as cognitive, psychological, speech and language development, and many others (Burger, 2010; Moser et al., 2005). For this reason, the study examine how the environment in urban slums of Johannesburg affects the early childhood development. The paper analyse whether the environment affect the early childhood development, and if so, what interventions can the government make to ensure favourable early childhood development.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study design**

This is a cross-sectional study, which utilise the General Household Survey (GHS) 2016. The survey was conducted by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), which aim to determine the progress of development in South Africa.

### **Study Population:**

The study is limited to children who were living in urban slums of Johannesburg when the 2016 GHS data was collected. The population of interest includes children of ages 0-5 years whom their proxy responded on early childhood development question on the GHS data. The study sample is 586 children who are residing in Johannesburg slums.

### **Variables:**

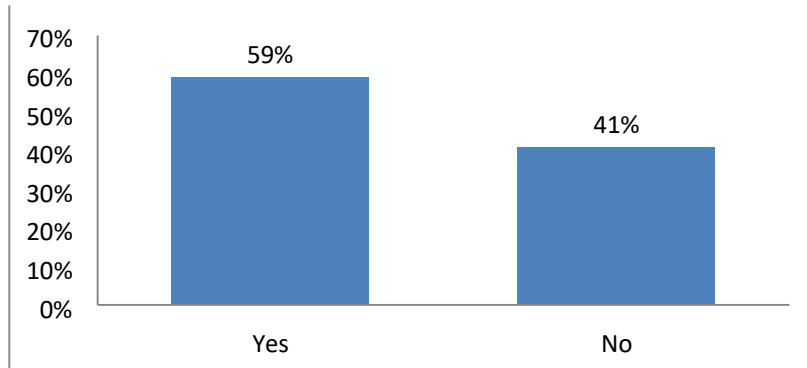
The independent variables are age, place of residence, mother still alive, father still alive, parent's marital status, parent level of education, and place where children spent most of their time during the day and type of ECD facilities that children attend.

The dependent variable is the early childhood development, which is cognitive development.

### Data analysis:

Data was analysed using STATA software. Binary logistic regression was used to examine the association between the place of residence and early childhood development.

### PRELIMINARY RESULTS



**Figure 1: The percentage of early childhood development facilities attendance**

The figure above shows the percentage of children who attend early childhood development in Johannesburg, South Africa. A greater percentage (59%) of the children aged below 5 years attend the ECD Facilities, 41 % do not attend.

**Table 1: Associations between predictor variables and attendance of ECD facilities**

Characteristics	Odds Ratio	P value	Confident interval [95%]	
<b>Age</b>	1,95	0.00	1,4924	2,5539
<b>Gender (RC-Male)</b>				
Female	0,64	0.34	0,2575	1,5907
<b>Father Alive (RC-Yes)</b>				
No	0,30	0.29	0,0340	2,6474
<b>Mother Alive (RC-Yes)</b>				
No	0,05	0.00	0,0124	0,1984

RC- Reference category

Table 1 shows that controlling for other variables, children living in urban slums of Johannesburg were associated with higher likelihood of not attending the Early Childhood development facility. Age and Mother alive variable were associated with greater odds of ARTIs with statistical significance.

### Conclusion

Early childhood development is crucial, however; within South Africa high proportion of children are not attending early childhood development facilities. This could be prone to various factors such as financial income, thus a further study that look at the association between the socio-economic status and early childhood development in urban slums is recommended.

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