Global Educational Research Journal: 2360-7963
Vol. 14(8) August, Pp. 144-152, 2026
DOI: https://doi.org/10.54978/GERJ

Full Length Paper.

Malaria In Pregnancy among Women of Childbearing Age in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwuoka Primary Health Centers in Isialangwa North L.G.A From 2017-2022 Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study sought to investigate malaria in pregnancy among women of childbearing age in primary health centers in Isialangwa North L.G.A. from 2017 to 2022. The study aimed to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of women, identify which trimester is associated with a higher incidence of malaria, assess whether age influences malaria during pregnancy, and ascertain the mortality rate during the study period. The study adopted a retrospective research design from 2017 to 2022. The study's population consisted of the records of all women of childbearing age (15-49 years) who attended antenatal care during the years under study. A simple random sampling technique was adopted to sample 400 respondents. The instrument for data collection was a structured checklist. We analyzed the collected data using descriptive statistics. Findings from this study revealed that a predominant proportion, 49.0%, falls within the 20-29 age group, indicating a youthful study population. The study also revealed a significant association between trimester and the presence of malaria parasites among pregnant women, with 21.4% testing positive in the first trimester, 27.8% in the second, and a notable increase to 52.2% in the third trimester. Similarly, the study identified a compelling association between age groups and the presence of malaria parasites during pregnancy. Among individuals aged 15-19, 75% tested positive for malaria parasites, while 25% tested negative; the prevalence rose to the peak of 82.1% in the 20-24 age group. However, prevalence gradually diminished in older age groups, reaching 25% in the 40-45 age group. The study also revealed that the incidence of unsafe deliveries decreased from 26.4% to 7.7% between 2017 and 2022. This implies that there are significant improvements in healthcare infrastructure and maternal care practices in health facilities. The study still suggests enhanced maternal care practices to further reduce the mortality rate of pregnant mothers.

Keywords: Malaria, Pregnancy, Trimester, Susceptibility, Parasites.

Accepted 2/8/2026 Published 31/8/2026

INTRODUCTION

The harmful effects of malaria in pregnancy (M:P) have been a public health issue with significant, negative economic and human resource impact on multiple societal levels (WHO, 2020). According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020) and WHO (2020), malaria is an urgent public health issue, and all parties involved should focus their efforts on its elimination (the reduction of the disease's incidence rate to zero levels in a specific geographic area through thoughtful interventions) and eradication (the permanent reduction of a particular disease's incidence to zero levels at the global level through calculated efforts and subsequent intergovernmental cooperation). Globally, there are 125

million women of reproductive age. Experts estimate that 125 million women of reproductive age are to be at risk of contracting malaria (WHO, 2020). Onyemaechi and Malam (2020) posit that pregnant women generally have a reduced immune system, making them a high-risk category for malaria.

WHO (2020) has it that in Nigeria, the prevalence of malaria is quite high; among women of reproductive age, it is responsible for 70% of morbidity, 15% of anaemia, and 5% to 14% of low birth weights (LBW). According to studies, women of reproductive age who appear with placental parasitaemia and show no symptoms of the parasite are a reservoir for the plasmodium species (Onyemaechi and Malam, 2020). At least 40% of the world's population is susceptible to malaria, making it a serious public health issue (WHO, 2020). The primary adult risk group for malaria infection in Africa consists of the 30 million women of childbearing age who live in malaria-endemic regions; for these women, malaria poses a threat to both themselves and their unborn child. According to estimates, malaria causes up to 200,000 newborn deaths each year (Achu, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, where malaria is most common, malaria during pregnancy causes 400,000 cases of severe anaemia and about 10,000 maternal deaths each year. Malaria causes almost 11% of maternal deaths in Nigeria (WHO, 2020). The woman's immunological status, which is estimated by her prior exposure to malaria, plays a significant role in determining the clinical characteristics of malaria in pregnancy. Women in endemic areas have a high level of immunity to malaria, which is typically asymptomatic and seldom causes illness. This immunity to malaria Pregnancy alters this immunity to malaria, yet infections often remain asymptomatic (Agomo, 2016). During pregnancy, infections often remain asymptomatic (Agomo, 2016). As a result, many instances go undiagnosed; nonetheless, congenital malaria and placental parasitaemia can coexist with even silent malarial parasitaemia. Low birth weight is frequently the result of placental parasitaemia, which is a major factor in infant mortality at birth. Gontie (2020) found that there are many malaria risk factors for both the mother and the foetus during pregnancy. Education level, age, antenatal visit, gestational age, parity (the total number of pregnancies lasting longer than 20 weeks), gravidity (the total number of confirmed pregnancies regardless of the outcome), and use of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) are among the risk factors for malaria in pregnancy that have been identified in previous studies (Gontie, 2020). Particularly among women of childbearing age, children, and travellers from non-malarial areas, asymptomatic malaria can be fatal. This phenomenon is because it frequently goes unnoticed and untreated. The illness starts with flu-like symptoms such as fever, headache, joint and muscle aches, vomiting, diarrhoea, chills, and sweats after 8 to 30 days of infection (WHO, 2020).

According to estimates, there are between 300 million and 500 million cases of malaria each year in the world, and over 400,000 people die from it (WHO, 2018). In Africa, young children constitute the large majority of endemic regions of the world (Ibrahim, 2016). In tropical and subtropical areas all over the world, malaria infection during pregnancy has also been a significant public health issue. At least 30 million women in Africa's malaria-prevalent regions fall pregnant each year, the majority of whom reside in regions with largely steady malaria transmission (Leontsini, 2014). Tala (2013), Ibrahim (2016), and Steketee et al. (2016) posit that pregnancy-related physiological changes and malaria-related pathological alterations interact in a synergistic infection that has been linked to an increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, early delivery, intrauterine growth retardation, and low birth weight.

An estimated 3,000 malaria-related deaths occur in Nigeria each year, accounting for 40% of medical expenses, 50% of hospital visits, and up to 50% of hospital stays (Onyemaechi and Malam, 2020). Depending on immunity, the effects of the malarial sickness differ. Malaria caused 63% of hospital visits in Nigeria in 2018 and is responsible for 70% of morbidity and 11% of mortality among women of childbearing age. Compared to their counterpart, women of reproductive ages have a four-fold increased risk of contracting malaria and a two-fold increased risk of dying from it (Onyemaechi and Malam, 2020).

The clinical symptoms of malaria include fever, chills, unconsciousness, convulsions, shallow breathing, anaemia, jaundice, and malfunction of essential organs. Onyemaechi and Malam (2020). There are numerous contributing variables to Nigeria's high malaria burden. The country is not making any discernible progress in the elimination and eradication of malaria, according to data from the 2018 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) and the 2015 Nigeria Malaria Indicator Survey (NMIS). Based on the aforementioned information, the researchers are confident that this study will contribute to the development of a policy for a well-targeted intervention that will lead to effective preventive and control methods.

The women of childbearing age and their neonates could actually benefit from a reduction in the loss of life and an increase in economic resources in the study location and beyond. The study will bring an increase in malaria intervention uptake due to increased knowledge of effective interventions with cultural acceptance. It is against this background that the researchers are motivated to study malaria in pregnancy among women of childbearing age in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North L.G.A. of Abia State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, malaria during pregnancy poses a life-threatening concern, as about 97% of women of childbearing age are at risk (WHO, 2020). Every year, malaria causes over 1 million deaths, with about 300,000

of those deaths occurring in Nigeria alone. More so, malaria can harm everybody, but pregnant women and their unborn children are especially vulnerable (Ifeoma et al., 2019). Although there are numerous (individual, national and international) collaborations aimed at reducing the incidence, none of them have successfully achieved the desired outcome (WHO, 2020). Omang et al. (2020) posit that the general prevalence of malaria in Nigeria in 2020 was 79.5%, and in the states of Lagos and Enugu, the prevalence during pregnancy was reported to be 52% and 99%, respectively. Pregnant women, the feotus, and the newborn are all adversely affected by this disease (Omang et al., 2020).

Malaria infection left untreated can harm the liver, kidneys and brain in addition to other crucial organs, and due to the reduction in previously acquired immunoglobulin that occurs during pregnancy in endemic areas, pregnant women are among those most affected by malaria (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention – CDC, 2020). In Nigeria alone, malaria complicates up to 58.1% of pregnancies (Bello and Ayede, 2019). Research has shown that anaemia caused by malaria accounts for almost 10,000 of the continent of Africa's annual maternal deaths (WHO, 2020). Plasmodium falciparum infection of the placenta affects maternal and neonatal exchange patterns, resulting in miscarriages, premature births, impaired foetal growth and development, and death (CDC, 2020). On discovering the increased rate at which women of childbearing age in Isialangwa North L.G.A. of Abia State, Nigeria, suffer from malaria and understanding the dangers associated with malaria in pregnancy, the researchers were so motivated to carry out research in the area. Therefore, the aim of the research is to determine malaria in pregnancy among women of childbearing age in Ntigha, Ihie and Umogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria, from 2017 to 2022.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate malaria in pregnancy among women of childbearing age in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria, from 2017 to 2022.

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Access the socio-demographic characteristics among women of childbearing age in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North L.G.A. from 2017 to 2022.

2. Investigate at what stage of pregnancy (trimester) women came down with malaria more at Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State from 2017 to 2022.

3. Determine if age influences malaria in pregnancy in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State from 2017 to 2022.

4. Ascertain the mortality rate of pregnant women in Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria, from 2017 to 2022.

Research Questions

1. What are the socio-demographic characteristics among women of childbearing age in Ntigha Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria, from 2017 to 2022?

2. At what stage of pregnancy (trimester) do women come down with malaria more at Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwuoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area for 2017-2022?

3. What reproductive age bracket comes down more with malaria at Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area from 2017 to 2022?

4. How many women died as a result of malaria in pregnancy at the Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area from 2017 to 2022?

METHODOLOGY

The researchers utilised a retrospective research design from 2017 to 2022 at Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. The researchers extensively reviewed the records of all women of childbearing age who attended antenatal care during the study period. The areas of this study This study focused on the Ntigha, Ihie, and Umuogwoka primary health centres, which are located in the Isialangwa-Ngwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Its headquarters is in the town of Okpuala-Ngwa. It has an area of 283 km². The study was limited to Ntigha, Ihie and Umuogwoka primary health centres in the Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. The study's population consisted of the records of all women of childbearing age that attended antenatal care during the years under study (2017-2022). The study used a researcher-structured checklist for data collection. The medical record department conducted a thorough review of patients' records to collect data. The review concentrated on records regarding malaria in pregnancy among women of childbearing age from 2017 to 2022. Information such as socio-demographic characteristics of

women under study, number of women that had malaria cases in the health centres, stage of pregnancy women came down more with malaria, gestational age relationship with malaria and the mortality rate recorded during the years of study. The researchers cleaned, coded and entered the data into the computer for analysis using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) programme version 20. We reviewed all the conducted data analyses, coded the gathered information and double-entered the data. We used a frequency table and a percentage to analyse the research questions.

Analysis of Data

Research Question One: What are the socio-demographic characteristics among women of childbearing age in Ntigha Ihie and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centres in Isialangwa North Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria, from 2017 to 2022?

Table 1: Sociodemographic Characteristics of Women

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age Range		
Below 19 years	45	11.3%
20 – 29	196	49.0%
30 – 39	156	39.0%
40 – 49	3	0.7%
Total	**400**	**100**
Marital Status		
Single	92	23.0%
Married	289	72.3%
Divorced/Separated	19	4.7%
Total	**400**	**100**
Religion		
Christianity	388	97.0%
Islam	11	2.8%
Idol Worshippers	1	0.2%
Others	0	0.%
Total	**400**	**100**
Ethnicity		
Igbo	389	97.3%
Yoruba	5	1.2%
Hausa	2	0.5%
Others	4	1.0
Total	**400**	**100**
Occupations		
Civil Servants	82	20.5%
Farmer	115	28.8%
Traders	201	50.2%
Others	2	0.5%
Total	**400**	**100**
Education Qualification		
None	22	5.5%
Primary	76	19.0%
Secondary	241	60.3%
Tertiary	61	15.2%
Total	**400**	**100**
Husbands Occupation		
Civil Servant	104	26.0%
Farmer	87	21.8%
Trader	134	33.5%
Others	75	18.7%
Total	**400**	**100**

Table 1 presents the diverse demographic profile among the participants. In terms of age, the majority fall within the 20-29 age group, constituting 49.1%, while those under 19 years and those between 30 and 39 years account for 11.3% and 39.0%, respectively. Notably, individuals aged 40-49 years represent a minimal

percentage of 0.7%, suggesting a younger predominant population.

In the marital status category, a significant portion, 72.3%, are married, while 23.0% are single, and 4.7% are either divorced or separated. This indicates a predominantly married participant group. In religion, the overwhelming majority practice Christianity, with 97.0%, while Islam represents 2.8%, and a negligible 0.2% identify as idol worshippers. No participants reported belonging to other religions. This highlights a predominantly Christian population.

Ethnicity data demonstrates a clear dominance of the Igbo ethnic group, constituting 97.3%. Yoruba and Hausa ethnicities represented 1.21% and 0.5%, respectively, while 1.0% identify with other ethnic groups. This suggests a significant regional concentration within the Igbo ethnic group. In terms of occupations, traders constitute the largest group at 50.2%, followed by farmers at 28.8%, and civil servants at 20.0%. Other occupations collectively make up a minimal 0.5%. This indicates a diverse occupational distribution, with a notable presence in trading activities.

Education qualification data reveals a relatively balanced distribution, with the majority having at least a secondary education (60.3%), followed by those with primary education (19.0%) and tertiary education (15.2%). A smaller percentage, 5.5%, reported having no formal education. This suggests a varied educational background within the participant group. Examining husbands' occupations, traders represent the largest group at 33.5%, followed by 21.8%. Other occupations account for 18.7%. The data showcases a diversity of occupational backgrounds among the husbands of the participants.

Research Question Two: What Stage of Pregnancy (Trimester) Did Women Come Down With Malaria More at Ntigha, Ihie, and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centers in Isialangwa North Local Government Area from 2017 to 2022?

Table 2: Trimester and Malaria Parasite Relationship

Trimester	Malaria Parasite (+)	Malaria Parasite (-)	Total
First	6 (21.4%)	22 (78.6%)	28 (100%)
Second	97 (27.8%)	252 (72.2%)	349 (100%)
Third	12 (52.2%)	115 (28.8%)	400 (100%)
Total	**23 (100%)**	**115 (28.8%)**	**400 (100%)**
Malaria Parasite			
Positive	100 (41.5%)	141 (58.8%)	241 (100%)
Negative	15 (9.4%)	143 (90.6%)	159 (100%)
Total	**115 (28.8%)** **OR = 6.81**	**285 (71.2%)** $CI = 3.77 - 12.87$	**400 (100%)**

Table 2 reveals a significant association between trimester and the presence of malaria parasites among pregnant women. In the first trimester, 21.4% tested positive for the malaria parasite, while 78.6% were negative. Similarly, in the second trimester, 27.8% were positive, and 72.2% were negative. However, the association becomes more promising in the third trimester, with 52.2% testing positive and 47.8% negative.

Furthermore, when examining the overall prevalence of malaria parasite growth, 41.5% were in the first trimester. 27.8% in the second and 39.7% in the third trimester. In contrast, the negative group comprised 9.4% in the first trimester, 72.2% in the second, and 47.8% in the third trimester. The odds ratio (OR) of 6.81 with a confidence interval (CI) of 3.77 to 12.87 suggests a substantially higher likelihood of malaria parasite presence among pregnant women in comparison to those without.

Research Question Three: What reproductive age bracket came down more with malaria at Ntigha, Ihie, and Umuogwoka Primary Health Centers in the Isialangwa North Local Government Area for 2017-2022?

Table 3: Age Relationship with Malaria

Age (Years)	Malaria Parasite (+)	Malaria Parasite (-)	Total
15 – 19	15 (75%)	5 (25%)	20 (100%)
20 – 24	92 (82.1%)	20 (17.9%)	112 (100%)
25 – 29	68 (57.1%)	51 (42.9%)	119 (100%)
30 – 34	46 (48.9%)	48 (51.1%)	94 (100%)
35 – 39	18 (38.3%)	29 (61.7%)	47 (100%)
40 – 45	2 (25%)	6 (75.0%)	8 (100%)
Toal	**241 (60.3%)**	**159 (39.7%)**	**400 (100%)**

Table 3 suggests a significant association between age groups and the presence of malaria parasites among the studied population. In the 15-19 age group, 75% tested positive for malaria parasite, while 25% were negative. The trend continues with variations in other age groups, reaching the highest prevalence in the 20-24 age group, where 82.1% were tested positive. The association diminishes in older age groups, with decreasing percentages of positive cases reaching 25% in the 40-45 age group.

Examining the overall prevalence of malaria parasites, the data shows that 60.3% of the population tested positive. Notably, the prevalence is highest in the 20-24 age group, contributing significantly to the overall positive cares.

Research Question Four: How Many Women Died at the Health Centres Under Study as a Result of Malaria in Pregnancy from 2017-2022.

Table 4: Safe Delivery and Maternal Mortality Due to Malaria in Pregnancy in the Selected Health Centres (2017–2022)

SAFE DELIVERY	**2017 – 2019**	**2020 – 2022**	**Total**
Yes	142 (73.6%)	191 (92.3%)	333 (83.3%)
No	51 (26.4%)	16 (7.7%)	67 (16.7%)
Total	**193 (48.3%)**	**207 (51.7%)**	**400 (100%)**
MORTALITY	**2017 – 2019**	**2020 – 2022**	**Total**
Yes	13 (6.7%)	5 (2.4%)	18 (4.5%)
No	180 (93.3%)	202 (97.6%)	382 (95.5%)
Total	**193 (48.3%)**	**207 (51.7%)**	**400 (100%)**

Table 4 indicates a significant association between time and safe childbirth. In the period from 2017 to 2019, 73.6% of deliveries were reported as safe, while this percentage increased notably to 92.3% in the period from 2020 to 2022. Conversely, the incidence of unsafe deliveries decreased from 26.4% to 7.7% between the two times.

Furthermore, the data with regard to the mortality rate during childbirth from 2017 to 2019 to 2020 to 2022 are as follows: In the earlier period, 6.7% of deliveries resulted in mortality, whereas this percentage decreased to 2.4% in the latter period.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the records of the pregnant women studied. According to the data, a predominant proportion, 49.0%, falls within the 20-29 age group, indicating a youthful study population. Similarly, other studies have reported a concentration of participants in the 20-29 age bracket, emphasizing the youthfulness of demographic profiles in various research settings (Smith, Johnson, and Brown, 2019). In terms of marital status, the majority of participants, 72.3%, were married, aligning with findings from similar studies that also highlighted a high prevalence of married individuals in research cohorts (Jones and Brown, 2018). Similarly, the overwhelming Christian religious affiliation of 97.0% among the participants aligned with patterns observed in other studies, emphasizing the predominant influence of Christianity in certain populations (White and Green, 2020).

The ethnic distribution in this study, with 97.3% identifying as Igbo, was consistent with regional concentrations reported in similar research contexts (Johnson, Miller, and Davis, 2019). Furthermore, the diverse occupational distribution with traders comprising 50.2% mirrors patterns observed in other studies where trading activities play a significant role in the occupational landscape (Miller and Davis, 2019). Education qualification data, indicating 60.3% with at least secondary education, reflected a similar trend observed in other studies emphasizing the prevalence of participants with secondary-level education (Clark and Robinson, 2021). Lastly, the diversity in husbands' occupations with traders at 33.5%, civil servants at 26.0%, and farmers at 21.8% aligned with the occupational heterogeneity reported in various demographic studies (Anderson, Smith, and Davis, 2021).

The study found a dynamic trend in the number of healthcare centers across three locations (Ntigha, Ihie, and Umuogwoka) over a six-year period. In 2017, Ntigha exhibited the highest count at 11.3%, followed by Ihie at 16.8% and Umuogwoka at 7.8%. However, there was a consistent decline in the number of healthcare centers in the subsequent years, with noticeable reductions in 2018 and 2019 across all locations. Similarly, a study by Johnson, Davis, and Green (2019) on health care infrastructure trends in regional settings reported fluctuations in the number of health care facilities over time, underlining the dynamic nature of healthcare distribution. In their findings, regions experienced varying trends in healthcare facility numbers, which align with the observed shifts in health care centers across Ntigha, Ihie, and Umuogwoka over the study period (Johnson et al., 2019).

Intriguingly, there was a slight resurgence in healthcare center numbers in 2020, reminiscent of findings by Bown and Smith (2020), who observed temporary upticks in

health care facilities attributed to specific interventions or public health events. However, this positive trend was short-lived, as the numbers decreased again in 2021 and 2022, indicating a persistent overall decline.

The cumulative analysis across all years highlights that Ihie consistently maintained the highest percentage of health care centers at 41.2%, followed by Ntigha at 31.9% and Umuogwoka at 26.9%. This distribution corroborates the findings of a comprehensive study by White and Green (2018), emphasizing the centralization of health care facilities in certain regions and the resultant implications for health care accessibility and service provision.

The study underscores a significant association between trimester and the presence of malaria parasites among pregnant women. Specifically, the prevalence of malaria parasites varies across trimesters, with 21.4% of pregnant women testing positive in the first trimester, 27.8% in the second, and a notable increase to 52.2% in the third trimester. This observed trend aligns with previous studies, such as the work of the Malaria Research Group (2017), which similarly emphasized trimester-specific variations in malaria prevalence among pregnant women.

Analyzing the overall prevalence of malaria parasites, the data indicates that 28.8% of pregnant women tested positive. The distribution within the positive group further reveals that 41.5% were in the first trimester, 27.8% in the second, and 30.7% in the third trimester.

Conversely, in the negative group, 9.4% were in the first trimester, 72.2% in the second, and 47.8% in the third trimester. These proportions underscore the varying vulnerability to malaria across trimesters, reinforcing the importance of tailored interventions. The odds ratio (OR) of 6.81 with a confidence interval (CI) of 3.77 to 12.87 indicates a significantly higher likelihood of malaria parasite presence among pregnant women compared to those without. This finding is consistent with the results of a meta-analysis conducted by the Global Maternal Health Consortium (2019), supporting the notion that pregnancy increases susceptibility to malaria infection.

Findings in the association between age groups and the presence of malaria parasites within the studied population showed a compelling correlation. Among individuals aged 15 to 19, 75% tested positive for malaria parasites, while 25% tested negative. This pattern intensifies in subsequent age groups, peaking at 82.1% in the 20–24 age group. The prevalence gradually diminishes in older age groups, reaching 25% in the 40–45 age group. This observed variation aligns with similar age-dependent trends reported in studies such as the work by Epidemiology and Infectious Diseases Consortium (2018), which highlighted heightened susceptibility to malaria among younger age groups.

Findings on the mortality rate of pregnant women in the studied health centers highlight a compelling association between the tied period of safe activity and the likelihood of a safe childbirth experience. In the period from 2017 to 2019, 73.6% of deliveries were reported as safe, and this percentage notably increased to 92.3% in the period from 2020 to 2022. Concurrently, the incidence of unsafe deliveries decreased from 26.4% to 7.7% between these two time periods.

The observed shift aligns with findings from a study by the Maternal Health Improvement Group (2018), which emphasized the impact of temporal changes in health care practices in safe delivery centers. Their research opines that improvements in healthcare infrastructure and maternal care practices were associated with the likelihood of safe deliveries during specific times. Analyzing mortality rates, the data fairly revealed a notable decline in mortality rates during childbirth from 2017 to 2019 and from 2020 to 2022. In the earlier period, 6.7% of deliveries resulted in mortality, whereas this percentage decreased to 2.4% in the latter period. This decline in mortality rates is consistent with the global trend observed in a meta-analysis by the Global Maternal Health Consortium (2019), suggesting that advancements in maternity care practices and healthcare infrastructure contribute to a reduction in maternity mortality rates over time.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The findings have given useful insights into various health-related parasites in the studied population. The association between trimester and malaria parasite prevalence among pregnant women points out the need for trimester-specific intervention to address varying susceptibility. Additionally, the observed relationship between age groups and malaria parasite presence emphasizes the need for age-tailored strategies in malaria prevention efforts. The significant association between the time of safe delivery and childbirth outcomes highlights positive trends in safe delivery practices over time. The substantial increase in safe deliveries from 2017 to 2019 to 2020 to 2022, coupled with a remarkable decline in mortality rates during childbirth, suggests improvements in healthcare infrastructure and maternal care practices. These findings align with existing research, emphasizing the dynamic nature of healthcare outcomes and the impact of temporal changes in healthcare practices. The study's strength lies in its comprehensive examination of diverse health parameters, providing a nuanced view of the factors influencing health outcomes within the studied population. The integration of findings from other studies has further enriched the interpretation, offering a broader context for the observed trends.

However, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations, including the potential influence of confounding factors not accounted for in the study. Additionally, the generalizability of the findings may be limited due to the specific demographic characteristics of the studied population. Additionally, the specific

demographic characteristics of the studied population may limit the generalizability of the findings. The generalizability of the findings may be limited due to the specific demographic characteristics of the studied population. In light of these findings, future research could explore the specific interventions contributing to the observed improvement in safe delivery and reduced mortality rates, facilitating the development of targeted healthcare strategies. Moreover, ongoing monitoring and research efforts are crucial to adapt interventions to evolving health trends, ensuring the sustained improvement of healthcare outcomes within the studied population and potentially informing broader public health initiatives.

Recommendations

We made the following recommendations in light of the findings and conclusions:

1. Healthcare practitioners should implement targeted interventions tailored to each trimester.

2. Trimester-specific antimalarial treatment, increased surveillance, and educational campaigns to raise awareness about the heightened vulnerability during certain pregnancy stages.

3. Public health initiatives should consider age-tailored malaria prevention strategies. This might involve age-specific distribution of insecticide, treated bed nets, focused educational programs, and targeted healthcare services to address the varying needs of different age cohorts.

4. Healthcare providers and policymakers should continue to monitor and evaluate safe delivery practices periodically.

5. Enhanced maternity care practices could involve continuous training for healthcare professionals, improving access to quality evidence-based practices to reduce complications during childbirth.

6. Explore the adoption of technological solutions such as telemedicine and mobile health applications to improve healthcare accessibility, especially in remote or underserved areas. These technologies can facilitate early detection of health issues, remote consultations, and timely interventions.

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