

UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF INSECTICIDE-TREATED NET USE IN MALARIA PREVENTION AND ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN UMUAHIA NORTH, NIGERIA

OPARA MONICA ONYINYECHI

FPSK(M) 2017 59



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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

May 2017

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF INSECTICIDE-TREATED NET USE IN MALARIA PREVENTION AND ITS ASSOCIATED FACTORS AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN IN UMUAHIA NORTH, NIGERIA

By

OPARA MONICA ONYINYECHI

May 2017

Chairman Faculty :

:

Suhainizam Muhamad Saliluddin, MPH Medicine and Health Sciences

Background: Malaria is an infectious disease which infects millions of people worldwide every year. The disease is a global health problem, which affect mainly young children especially those less than five years of age and pregnant women.

Objective: The aim is to determine the level of knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets (ITNs) use in malaria prevention and its associated factors among pregnant women in Umuahia North, Nigeria.

Methodology: A cross-sectional study was carried out using simple random sampling to select two hospitals among 10 hospitals; afterwards, simple random sampling with proportionate to size was employed to select the number of participants from each of the hospitals using guided self-administered questionnaire distributed to the pregnant women who met the inclusion criteria and came for antenatal visit. Data was collected using a pre-tested and validated questionnaire consisting of 5 sections involving the socio-demographic characteristics, knowledge, attitude, perceived barriers and maternal factors. The knowledge was measured using "Yes", "No" or I don't know options; The attitude was measured on a 5-point likert scale "strongly disagree" [0], "disagree" [1], "unsure" [2], "agree" [3], "strongly agree" [4]; perceived barriers was measured on a 5-point likert scale "strongly disagree" [1], "unsure" [2], "agree" [4]; past history of malaria related complication was measured using "Yes" or "No" options; while the questions on maternal factors were also measured. Three level of analyses were conducted which were descriptive analysis, chi-square and logistic regression. The significance level was set at 0.05.

Results: A total of 426 respondents were involved in the study with 97.3% response rate. The overall mean knowledge score of the respondents was 6.85 (\pm 0.503), with



90.7% of having high knowledge on insecticide treated nets (ITNs) in malaria prevention. However, 51.1% (mean = 40.09, SD ± 5.5237) of the respondents held positive attitude. Majority of the respondents among the age group of 25-34 years were 341 (77.5), 414 (94.1) were Igbos, 401 (91.1) were married. Majority of the respondents 339 (77.0) were currently living in Urban, 342 (77.7) held tertiary education, Most of the respondents earned 71,000 and above, and more than half 294 (66.8) of the respondents had no past history of malaria related complication.

There were significant association between knowledge regarding the use of insecticide treated nets and ethnicity (P=0.001), monthly income (X2=11.957, P=0.008), parity (X2=8.487, P=0.014), and also perceived barriers (X2=5.812, P=0.016). However, there was significant independent predictors of knowledge on insecticide treated nets (ITNs) use and ethnicity (AOR=4.891, p = 0.024, 95% CI=1.231-19.429), in which those with higher odds of having high knowledge. Monthly income (AOR=0.358, p = 0.015, 95% CI=0.157-0.820), and also level of education (AOR=3.715, p = 0.019, 95% CI=1.244-11.094). There were significant association between attitude towards the use of insecticide treated nets and age (X2=44.801, P= 0.001), marital status (P= 0.008), monthly income (X2=139.417, P= 0.001), educational status (X2=23.544, P= 0.001), past history of malaria related pregnancy complication (X2=70.113, P=0.001), stages of pregnancy (X2=57.244, P=0.001), gravidity (X2=38.881, P=0.001), parity (X2=25.116, P= 0.001) and perceived barrier (X2=144.423, P= 0.001). Furthermore, there was significant independent predictors of attitude towards the use of insecticide treated nets (ITNs) and monthly income (AOR= 0.257, p = 0.001, 95% CI=0.124-0.531), in which those with lower odds of having positive attitude. Past history of malaria related complicated pregnancy (AOR=1.858, p = 0.043, 95% CI=1.019-3.386), and Perceived barriers (AOR=1.435, p = 0.001, 95% CI=1.284-1.605).

Conclusion: This study has identified that there is high level of knowledge, negative attitude among pregnant women in Umuahia North LGA, Abia State. However, predictors of knowledge and attitude were also determined.

Keywords: Knowledge, attitude, ITNs, Malaria, Pregnant women.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

PENGETAHUAN DAN SIKAP TERHADAP PENGGUNAAN NET TERAWAT INSEKTISID DALAM PENCEGAHAN MALARIA DAN FAKTOR BERKAITAN DALAM KALANGAN WANITA MENGANDUNG DI UTARA UMUAHIA, NIGERIA

Oleh

OPARA MONICA ONYINYECHI

Mei 2017

Pengerusi:Suhainizam Muhamad Saliluddin, MPHFakulti:Perubatan dan Sains Kesihatan

Latar belakang: Malaria merupakan penyakit berjangkit yang menjangkati ribuan manusia sejagat pada setiap tahun. Penyakit ini merupakan masalah kesihatan global yang memberi kesan, kebanyakannya pada kanak-kanak, terutama mereka yang berusia kurang daripada lima tahun dan juga wanita mengandung.

Objektif: Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan tahap pengetahuan dan sikap terhadap penggunaan net terawat insektisid (ITN) dalam pencegahan malaria dan faktor berkaitan dalam kalangan wanita mengandung di Utara Umuahia, Nigeria.

Metodologi: Kajian keratan rentas telah dijalankan menggunakan persampelan rawak mudah bagi memilih dua buah hospital antara 10 hospital; seterusnya, persampelan rawak mudah mengikut kadar dengan saiz telah digunakan untuk memilih bilangan peserta daripada setiap hospital menggunakan soal selidik swatadbir terbimbing yang diedarkan kepada wanita mengandung yang menepati kriteria terangkum dan yang hadir pada lawatan antenatal. Data telah dikumpul menggunakan soal selidik praujian dan yang telah divalidasikan mengandungi 5 bahagian, termasuk ciri sosiodemografi, pengetahuan, sikap, penghalang teranggap dan faktor maternal. Pengetahuan diukur menggunakan opsyen "Ya", "Tidak" atau " Saya tidak tahu": Sikap diukur menggunakan skala likert 5 mata "sangat tidak setuju" [0], "tidak setuju" [1], "tidak pasti" [2], "setuju" [3], "sangat setuju" [4]; penghalang teranggap diukur menggunakan skala likert 5 mata "sangat tidak setuju" [0], "tidak setuju" [1], "tidak pasti" [2], "setuju" [3], "sangat setuju" [4]; sejarah lepas komplikasi berkaitan malaria diukur menggunakan opsyen "Ya" or "Tidak"; manakala soalan mengenai faktor maternal juga telah diukur. Tiga tahap analisis telah dilaksanakan, iaitu analisis deskriptif, khi kuasa dua dan regresi logistik. Tahap signifikan telah disetkan pada 0.05.



Dapatan: Sebanyak 426 responden telah terlibat dalam kajian ini dengan 97.3% kadar respon. Min keseluruhan skor pengetahuan responden ialah 6.85 (\pm 0.503), dengan 90.7% mempunyai pengetahuan yang tinggi terhadap net terawat insektisid (ITN) dalam pencegahan malaria. Walau bagaimanapun, 51.1% (min = 40.09, SD \pm 5.5237) responden memperlihatkan sikap yang positif. Kebanyakan responden dalam kalangan kumpulan umur 25-34 tahun, iaitu 341 (77.5), 414 (94.1) ialah Igbo, 401 (91.1) telah berkahwin. Majoriti responden 339 (77.0) kini tinggal di bandar, 342 (77.7) mempunyai pendidikan tertiari, ramai responden berpendapatan 71,000 dan ke atas, dan lebih daripada separuh 294 (66.8) responden tidak mempunyai sejarah lepas komplikasi berkaitan malaria.

Terdapat asosiasi yang signifikan antara pengetahuan berkaitan dengan penggunaan net terawak insektisid dan etnik (P= 0.001), pendapatan bulanan (X2=11.957, P= 0.008), pariti (X2=8.487, P= 0.014), dan juga penghalang teranggap (X2=5.812, P= 0.016). Walau bagaimanapun, terdapat prediktor independen pengetahuan yang signifikan terhadap penggunaan net terawat insektisid (ITN) dan etnik (AOR=4.891, p = 0.024, 95% CI=1.231-19.429), mereka dengan rencaman yang lebih tinggi mempunyai pengetahuan yang tinggi. Pendapatan bulanan (AOR=0.358, p = 0.015, 95% CI=0.157-0.820), dan juga tahap pendidikan (AOR=3.715, p = 0.019, 95%) CI=1.244-11.094). Terdapat asosiasi yang signifikan antara sikap terhadap penggunaan net terawat insektisid dan umur (X2=44.801, P=0.001), status marital (P= 0.008), pendapatan bulanan (X2=139.417, P= 0.001), status pendidikan (X2=23.544, P=0.001), sejarah lepas malaria berkaitan dengan komplikasi kehamilan (X2=70.113, P= 0.001), peringkat kehamilan (X2=57.244, P= 0.001), graviditi (X2=38.881, P= 0.001), pariti (X2=25.116, P= 0.001) dan penghalang teranggap (X2=144.423, P= 0.001). Tambahan pula, terdapat prediktor independen sikap yang signifikan terhadap penggunaan net terawat insektisid (ITN) dan pendapatan bulanan (AOR = 0.257, p = 0.001, 95% CI = 0.124 - 0.531), mereka dengan rencaman yang lebih rendah mempunyai sikap yang positif. Sejarah lepas malaria berkaitan komplikasi kehamilan (AOR=1.858, p = 0.043, 95% CI=1.019-3.386), dan penghalang teranggap (AOR=1.435, p = 0.001, 95% CI=1.284-1.605).

Kesimpulan: Kajian ini telah mengenal pasti bahawa terdapat tahap pengetahuan yang tinggi, sikap yang negatif dalam kalangan wanita mengandung di Utara LGA Umuahia, Negeri Abia. Di samping itu, prediktor pengetahuan dan sikap juga telah dikenal pasti.

Kata kunci: Pengetahuan, sikap, ITN, Malaria, wanita mengandung.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank the Almighty God for giving me the opportunity to carry out this work.

I give special thanks to my father Mr. Francis C. Opara, my wonderful siblings for their constant encouragement and support throughout this program.

This work was facilitated by the untiring efforts of my major supervisor Dr. Suhainizam Muhamad Saliluddin, whose constructive criticism and guidance made this work what it is. I feel highly indebted to other members of my supervisory committee; Dr. Suriani Binti Ismail and Dr. Ifechukwu E. Adieze who made it possible for me to undergo this program.

Special appreciation goes to the pregnant women who voluntarily participated in this study and also all staff of health care facilities used in this study.

I am very grateful to my friends and colleagues, Tochukwu Mgbeojedo, Mrs. Itse Jacdomni and Inimfon Essiet who helped directly or indirectly in making this study a success. I will forever remain grateful.

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 26 May 2017 to conduct the final examination of Opara Monica Onyinyechi on her thesis entitled "Knowledge and Attitude of Insecticide-Treated Net Use in Malaria Prevention and its Associated Factors among Pregnant Women in Umuahia North, Nigeria" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

Members of the Thesis Examination Committee were as follows:

Huda binti Zainuddin, PhD Senior Lecturer Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Universiti Putra Malaysia (Chairman)

Halimatus Sakdiah binti Minhat, PhD

Associate Professor Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Universiti Putra Malaysia (Internal Examiner)

Zaliha Ismail, PhD Senior Lecturer Universiti Teknologi MARA Malaysia (External Examiner)

NOR AINI AB. SHUKOR, PhD Professor and Deputy Dean School of Graduate Studies Universiti Putra Malaysia

Date: 4 September 2017

This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

Suhainizam Muhamad Saliluddin MB, BCh, BAO, MPH

Senior Lecturer (Medical) Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Universiti Putra Malaysia (Chairman)

Suriani Binti Ismail M.D, MPH, PhD

Senior Lecturer (Medical) Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Universiti Putra Malaysia (Member)

Ifechukwu, Enyinnaya Adieze, PhD

Senior Lecturer Faculty of Science Federal University of Technology, Owerri (Member)

ROBIAH BINTI YUNUS, PhD Professor and Dean School of Graduate Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Signature:			
Name of			
Chairman of			
Supervisory			
Committee:	Suhainizam Muhamad Saliluddin MB, BCh, BAO, MPH		
	0	Dr. SURIANI BT ISMAIL MMC Full Registration No. 29362 Public Health Medicine Specialist	
Signature:	lun	Department of Community Health	
Name of		Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences	
Member of		Universiti Putra Malaysia	
Supervisory		43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor.	
Committee:	Suriani Binti Ismail M.	D, MPH, PhD	

Signature: Name of Member of Supervisory

Committee:

Ifechukwu, Enyinnaya Adieze, PhD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACTS	Artemisimium-based Combination Therapies
AMNS	Any Mosquitoes Nets
ANC	Antenatal Care
DOT	Directly Observed Therapy
FMOH	Federal Ministry Of Health
GFATM	Global Fund To Fight Aids, Tuberculosis And Malaria
IRS	Residual-House Spray
IRS	Internal Revenue System
IUCN	International Union For Conservation Of Nature
IPTP	Intermittent Preventive Treatment Of Malaria In Pregnancy
IPT	Intermittent Presumptive Therapy
ITN	Insecticide Treated Nets
LLIN	Long-Lasting Insecticide Nets
NDHS	Nigeria Demographic And Health Survey
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NMCSP	National Malaria Control Strategies Plan
PAS	Protected Areas
PF	Plasmodium Falciparum
RBM	Roll Back Malaria
SMS	Short Message Service
SP	Sulphadoxine-Pyrimethamine
USAID	United States Agency For International Development
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
UN	United Nation
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Malaria is a transmittable disease that affects millions of people globally every year. It is a worldwide health issue that affect younger children especially mostly ones who are below five years of age and as well as pregnant women. However, those with low immunity are at risk of getting the disease. Malaria is caused by any of the human malaria parasites, examples include: *Plasmodium Falciparum*, *Plasmodium Malariae and Plasmodium Ovale*. The most common, dangerous, and dreaded malaria parasite is the *Plasmodium Falciparum* (WHO, 2006). *Plasmodium Falciparum* infections lead to a wide range of clinical diseases which include life threatening anemia and coma among children and also severe disease syndrome during pregnancy among first time pregnant women. Through the bite of female anopheles mosquitoes can transmit the disease (WHO, 2006).

Malaria endemic areas include Africa, Asia, Central and South America, Oceania, certain Caribbean Islands, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Ivory Coast, and Mali. Unpredictably, during the same period in sub-Saharan Africa, decrease in malaria morbidity and mortality patterns has been recorded (Eisele et al., 2009; Eisele et al., 2010; RBM, 2011; Komatsu et al., 2010), and illnesses associated with malaria in under-fives, such as episodes of fever, have reduced extensively (Lengeler, 2004). In Africa, approximately 174 million (representing 80.5%) of these cases and about 596,000 (90.1%) of these deaths have occurred, and 86% of the death weight is borne by children under 5 years of age. Six countries account for 60% (390,000) of the global problem of deaths which is caused by malaria.

In Africa, malaria is accountable for an annual loss of 35 million future life years from disability and prematurity. The malaria infection accounts for at least 1.3% reduction in Africa's financial growth yearly, with approximately US\$ 12 billion yearly losses both as direct and indirect cost of disease. The United Nations (UN) Inter-agency for Child Mortality in 2010 summarized the problem of malaria borne disease. The way of malaria transmission and disease differ decidedly between regions and even within individual countries. The results range from variations between malaria parasites and mosquito vectors.

Poverty and access to effective health care and prevention services are ecological conditions that affect malaria transmission. Socio-economic factors should be also considered. Malaria has been a fast growing health problem in Africa. Each year, more than 1 million people who die from malaria live in sub-Saharan Africa (Bryce et al., 2005). There are 60% of malaria cases worldwide, 75% of *Falciparum* malaria cases globally and more than 80% of malaria deaths that occur in Sub-Saharan Africa. In

common African countries, malaria will account for 25-35% of all outpatient visits, 20-45% of hospital admissions and 15-35% of hospital deaths that impose a bigger problem on previously delicate health-care systems (WHO, 2005). Africa having insufficient resources to bear the economic problem of the consequences and having to cope with the lack of proper infrastructure to successfully treat cases and been exposed to the most severe form of diseases which is mainly susceptible to malaria (WHO, 2006). In Sub-Saharan African, changes in the problem of malaria showed that, in the occurrence of malaria in Ibadan between the years 2000-2005 was on the increasing side (Wendy Prudhomme et al., 2010). They went a long way to provide nets to children and pregnant women through the maternal and child health clinics in 2004. Following a significant grant from Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM), the massive distribution of free nets to all children younger than five years was organized in 2006. These measures have gone a long way to increase the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) by children aged less than five years from 7.1% in 2004 to 67.3% in 2006 in selected regions. The aim to fight against pyrethroids by Anopheles gambiae and Anopheles funestus has been started in several African countries which include neighboring Burkina Faso (Yamamoto et al., 2009).

In Africa, the problem of malaria is worst but the prevention and treatment are reaching more to people globally, although it is too early to determine if these findings will have any influence on illness and death from the disease (World Health Organization 2005 report). For actual control of malaria, World Health Organization (WHO) endorsed fast diagnosis, concrete treatment and use of insecticide-treated bed nets. Insecticide-treated bed nets use has been shown to be the most cost-effective way of preventing malaria. Many studies which were conducted in East and West African countries stated the barriers that prevent pregnant women from using ITNs and Intermittent Presumptive Therapy (IPT) such as wrong perceptions, inequity in malaria treatment and low socio-economic status. (Aluko et al., 2012; Atieli et al., 2011; Auta, 2012; Baume & Arin, 2008; Belay & Deressa, 2008; Yassin, 2010). Previously, the use and ownership of protective commodities against malaria has been increased, (Public Health Epidemiology, 446 J.). In the year 2000, only a few household in most African countries owned nets, even fewer owned insecticide treated nets (ITNs). The reverse is the case now as a lot has changed concerning ownership of ITNs in many African countries. This great change can be endorsed to reduce the taxes and tariffs in many countries, such as in commercial market development, social marketing activities, demand creation and efforts to spread the most susceptible group of people with free or highly supported ITNs. From the above information, one will not be far from right if one starts a move to examine the assessment of the coverage and consistent use of ITNs in the prevention of malaria among pregnant women in some parts of the country. Malaria is the major public health problem in Nigeria.



1.1.1 Factors influencing the use of insecticide treated nets

Several factors have been identified as contributing to its emergence and spread. These include environmental and socio-economic changes, deterioration of health care and food production systems, and the modification of microbial/vector adaptation (McMichael et al., 1998; Morse, 1995). In malaria endemic areas, factors such as poverty, poor socio-economic status, poor education, lack of enlightenment and poor

environmental sanitation have been attributed to availability of mosquito-friendly environment- conditions which allow for survival and proliferation of the vector and pathogenic parasite (McMichael et al., 1998). There is higher incidence among pregnant women and children under five years of age. Instead of many preventive interventions, incidence of malaria during pregnancy is still very high. More than 52% of pregnant women attending ante-natal care clinics are affected by malaria. Malaria during pregnancy has been reported to be associated with serious impacts on mothers, their fetus, and neonates in Nigeria. Anemia, spontaneous abortion, intrauterine growth retardation, stillbirth, premature and preterm labor, low birth-weight and maternal mortality often complicate the disease (NMCP, 2008).

Before the development of insecticide treated nets (ITNs) as a new technology in the mid-1980s, people in many countries were already using different types of nets, mainly to protect themselves against insects' bites and for other cultural reasons (MacCormack et al., 1989, Robert & Carnevale, 1991 & Aikins et al., 1994). It was only recently appreciated that a net treated with insecticide offers much greater protection against malaria; not only does the net act as a mechanical barrier to prevent mosquitoes come into contact and bite humans, but also the insecticide repels, inhibits, or kills any mosquitoes attracted to feed. By reducing the vector population, ITNs when used by the majority of the target population provides protection both to individuals sleeping under them and to the other community members who do not sleep under the nets. It can give protection of up to 90% and significantly reduces the incidence of malaria during pregnancy as well as its complications. The effect is so significant that the usage of ITNs is considered to be one of the most effective prevention measures for malaria (CDC, 2008 & Clifton, 2008). In addition to prevention of malaria when used by pregnant women, ITNs are also efficient in reducing maternal anaemia, placental infection, and low birth weight (Garner & Gulmezoglu, 2000).

Generally in Nigeria, the acceptance of ITNs and ownership of nets are low. Consistent use of these nets is very important in the prevention of malaria. The use of insecticide treated bed nets among exposed groups (such as children under-five years of age and pregnant women) and also the current strategy of the National Malaria Control Programme is always based on actual case management (Anto *et al.*, 2009). In spite of all these efforts, the rate of malaria infection increases by the day.

1.2 Problem statement

Malaria is a mosquito borne disease which, in humans, is caused by five protozoa: *Plasmodium falciparum, Plasmodium vivax, Plasmodium malariae*, related sibling species of *Plasmodium ovale*, and *Plasmodium knowlesi*. *Plasmodium vivax* is the most cosmopolitan of the human malarias, reaching historical latitudinal extremes of 64° north and 32° south (Snow & Gilles, 2002). The public health burden posed by *P. vivax* is no longer regarded as benign, causing severe morbidity and death (Baird, 2013). Nevertheless, *plasmodium falciparum* remains the single most important threat to public health at a global scale, accounting for more than 90% of the world's malaria mortality.

Forty thousand years on, *Plasmodium falciparum* remains entrenched in Africa, largely as a result of optimal environmental conditions for the world's most efficient Anopheline mosquito vectors, amid sustained poverty. We remain unacceptably ignorant of the full extent of the public health burden posed by this parasite; however, it is clear that, over time, the mortality effects of *Plasmodium falciparum* have been significant, serving as a potent selective force on the human genome to confer red cell and hemoglobin genetic advantages against disease and death (Allison, 1954). It is reasonable to assume that Africa has contributed most to the global malaria burden for millennia.

There is evidence (Okiro et al., 2009; Roca-Feltrer et al., 2010; Snow & Marsh, 2002 & Noor et al., 2014) to suggest that despite a changing pathogenesis and age pattern of disease, the overall rate of severe, life-threatening disease in childhood remains stable for a large part of the transmission curve and only when conditions within the meso-endemic range are reached do the rates of disease begin to significantly decline. As transmission declines further, the risk of infection becomes more directly related to the chances of becoming sick and developing severe complications until a state is reached where infection risks and disease outcomes are both rare. Lacking functional immunity, the consequences of any new infection for an individual become increasingly severe. These unstable conditions become very susceptible to even the smallest of perturbations in climate, ecology, population movement, and intervention efficacy (drug and insecticide resistance) or coverage. It is also estimated that about half of the population of adults in Nigeria suffer from at least one incidence of malaria annually, that children who are under five years have as many as three or four incidences every year, and closely 110 million cases of malaria are clinically examined yearly; from the record, 60% of outpatients pay visits while 30% are being hospitalized (Komatsu, 2010). Statistics on malaria cases in 2007 was 45%; 45% was also recorded as malaria cases in 2008 while in 2009 it then increased to 47%. These findings show that there was no change in the malaria cases between the year 2007 and 2008 but in 2009, there was an increase in malaria cases which was about 2% (Runsewe-Abiodun et al., 2012).

In malaria transmission areas, pregnant women in particular primigravidae are known to be susceptible to malaria and to have higher prevalence and densities of parasitaemia than are non-pregnant women from the same population (Desai *et al.*, 2007). The size of the excess risk varies with the age of the pregnant woman, reflecting cumulative exposure to malaria over a lifetime, and with parity, as a result of pregnancy specific immunity acquired after exposure to malaria in previous pregnancies. The consequences of malaria infection during pregnancy will depend on maternal malaria immune status; however, infections are associated with maternal anaemia and fetal growth retardation, and can result in acute illness, pregnancy loss or preterm delivery, and even maternal mortality.

Currently in Nigeria, malaria Parasitaemia increased greatly among pregnant women in the geographic regions. Hospital-based prevalence percentages range from 5% in the north-western region which was reported by Isah *et al* (2011) and cited by Jayleen *et al* (2015), while a study by Uneke *et al* (2007) reported that there was 17% of the



disease in the south-western region as was cited by Jayleen et al (2015). The percentage was 95 in the south-eastern region where the study was carried out. This is to show that malaria is prevalent among pregnant women at the study location.

An estimated 75 000–200 000 infant deaths annually are associated with malaria infection during pregnancy (Steketee *et al.* 2001). In areas of low or unstable malaria transmission, the risk of developing severe malaria is very high due to little or no immunity to the disease (Menendez 1995). In these areas, malaria significantly contributes to the direct cause of maternal mortality or an indirect malaria-induced anaemia. Spontaneous abortion, neonatal death and low birth weight are the major adverse outcomes of malaria infection during pregnancy in these areas. Effective tools to prevent and control malaria during pregnancy have been a challenge (Steketee *et al.* 1996b).

Current global initiatives to control malaria include a combination of preventive and curative measures such as vector control, use of insecticide treated bed nets, mosquito repellants, intermittent preventive treatment (IPT), Sulfaoxune-pyrimethamine (SP), chemoprophylaxis, and effective case management (Bates & Herrington 2007). Insecticide treated nets are an effective and cost effective means of preventing malaria.

During the last decade, intermittent preventive treatment (IPT) of malaria infection with sulfadoxine-pyrimethamine (SP) during pregnancy has increasingly been used in sub-Sahara Africa (SSA), and is currently recommended for all pregnant women in areas of stable malaria transmission (WHO 2004). Consequently, many countries in sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) have progressively scaled up IPT implementation (Hill & Kazembe 2006) towards 60% of the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) targets by 2005 (WHO 2000).

However, the use of IPT during pregnancy in areas of unstable or seasonal malaria transmission has not been recommended (WHO 2004) and Ethiopia has not adopted the use of this intervention for the prevention of malaria among pregnant women (Newman et al. 2003). Moreover, resistance to sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine (SP) in many countries in sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) and its replacement with the more expensive artemisinin-based combination therapies has posed a major threat to IPT implementation for the prevention and control of malaria during pregnancy (WHO 2001 & Mutabingwa, 2005). Therefore, one of the most promising tools for malaria prevention and control during pregnancy is the use of insecticide treated nets (ITNs), which reduced the risk of malaria infection, maternal anaemia and low birth weight in many community-randomized trials (Dolan et al. 1993; D'Alessandro *et al.*, 1996; Ter Kuile *et al.*, 2003).

Previous studies also show that knowledge and awareness of the Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) in the western part of Nigeria are still low (18%) among pregnant women Globally Harmonized System, 2009 and also, a study conducted by Noland G.S *et al.*, (2014) stated that the number of nets per household was significantly low in Abia State; the household ownership of at least one bed net was 10.1% in Abia State. World

Health Organization and its subsidiary organization placed a prominence on the use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) and also called for a detail to determine the awareness and practices of use of the Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) in Abia state. In this District (Umuahia North), information which was gathered from the Region Health Directorate indicates that there has not been a study to determine the knowledge, awareness and practices of use of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs). Therefore, there is a need for a study in this area to obtain accurate and reliable baseline data to provide guidelines and awareness on Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) and its use among pregnant women in the region. If this is done, it will go a long way in reducing malaria infections among people in the district especially pregnant women.

1.3 Significance of the study

This study could serve as additional information on the knowledge, attitude and practices of use Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) among pregnant women in Nigeria. Information gathered from the Umuahia North District of Abia State Health Directorate shows that there is no known study conducted on the knowledge, attitude and practices of use Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) among pregnant women in the Region.

The findings and recommendations of this study could inform policy makers at the district, regional and national levels in making pragmatic policies as far as malaria prevention and control programmes are concerned. The findings and recommendations of the study could also guide the Umuahia North Region Health Directorate to plan and implement effective ITN programmes to help increase Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) awareness and its practice and use in the region. Raising public awareness of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) for malaria prevention intervention in Umuahia region is necessary to increase uptake and utilization of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) and to reduce malaria among pregnant women.

The findings of this study could be also useful in reviewing the national malaria strategic plan to incorporate targeted reproductive women's education for malaria control in Umuahia. Education to help pregnant women has a positive influence on awareness and practice and use of insecticide treated nets in one way or another. In terms of programming, efforts are needed to expand community level distribution campaigns to intensify appropriate behavior change intervention that highlight the effectiveness of Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) in malaria prevention as the distribution of insecticide treated nets is still processing, so that the proportion of pregnant women using the insecticide treated nets will increase. Findings from this study could serve as a baseline for further intervention studies.



1.4 Research questions

- i. What are the socio-demographic characteristics among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?
- ii. What is the level of knowledge and attitude on insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?
- iii. What is the prevalence of history of malaria complication among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?
- iv. What are the barriers to the use of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North, Nigeria?
- v. What is the association between socio-demographic factors and knowledge, and attitude of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?
- vi. What is the association between barriers, stages of pregnancy, gravidity, parity and knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?
- vii. What are the predictors of knowledge and attitude of use of ITNs among pregnant women in Umuahia North Nigeria?

1.5 Research objectives:

1.5.1 General objective:

This study was aimed at determining the knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets use in malaria prevention and its associated factors among pregnant women in Umuahia North, Nigeria.

1.5.2 Specific objectives:

- a. To determine the distribution of the respondents according to;
 - i. Socio-demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, monthly income and level of education)
 - ii. Levels of knowledge
 - iii. Levels of attitude
 - iv. Past history of malaria related complication
- b. To determine the associations between knowledge towards the use of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women and;
 - i. Socio-demographic characteristics (age, ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, monthly income and level of education)
 - ii. Perceived barriers
 - iii. Parity
 - iv. Gravidity
 - v. Stages of pregnancy

c. To determine the predicting factors associated with the knowledge and attitude towards the use of insecticide treated nets (ITNs) among pregnant women in Umuahia North, Nigeria.

1.6 Research hypothesis:

- i. There is a significant association between socio-demographic factors and knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North.
- ii. There is a significant association between previous history of malaria/malaria-related pregnancy complications and knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North.
- iii. There is a significant association between perceived barriers, stages of pregnancy, gravidity, parity and knowledge and attitude of insecticide treated nets among pregnant women in Umuahia North.

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