

Article

Examining Malaria Incidence, Related Deaths, and their Relationship in Nigeria: A State-Level Analysis from 2010 to 2020

Editor: Masood Ahsan Siddiqui

Received: 15.11.2025

Revised: 20.01.2026

Accepted: 24.01.2026

Published: 26.01.2026

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Abstract

This research examines the change and relationship in malaria incidences and malaria-related death rates from 2010 to 2020. The study focuses on analyzing the slope and regression results to understand the change on the magnitude and direction of malaria at state level in Nigeria. The findings reveal that there is a positive association between malaria incidences and malaria-related death rates. The regression analysis demonstrates a significant relationship between these variables, with a high R-squared value of 0.85, indicating that approximately 85% of the variation in malaria-related death rates can be explained by changes in malaria incidences. The statistically significant p-values and F-statistic of 0.000 further confirm the robustness and significance of the model. The results underscore the critical importance of effective malaria prevention and control measures. The study highlights the need for comprehensive strategies that encompass mosquito control, bed net distribution, and access to appropriate anti-malarial treatment. By addressing these factors, the burden of malaria on public health can be significantly reduced.

Keywords: Geostatistics, OLS, Malaria

1. Introduction

Malaria, caused by the Plasmodium parasite transmitted through the bites of infected mosquitoes, has long been a major health concern in Nigeria (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). According to the World Malaria Report (WHO, 2020), Nigeria accounted for nearly a quarter of the global malaria cases in 2019. This highlights the urgent need for comprehensive research and effective interventions to address the malaria burden in the country.

Malaria continues to pose a significant public health challenge, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria, as the most populous country in Africa, bears a substantial burden of malaria cases and related mortality (Johnson et al., 2020). Understanding the geographical distribution of malaria hotspots and their association with mortality rates is crucial for targeted intervention strategies and resource allocation (Smith & Brown, 2019). In 2020, a study conducted by Johnson et al. aimed to

explore the relationship between malaria hotspots and mortality at the state level in Nigeria. The study employed regression analysis to examine the factors contributing to the observed mortality patterns in these hotspots (Johnson et al., 2020; Anderson, 2018). By identifying the specific areas with higher mortality rates, policymakers and healthcare providers can prioritize interventions and allocate resources effectively (Williams, 2017).

Malaria in Nigeria are influenced by a range of factors that contribute to mortality rates. Socioeconomic factors have been identified as significant determinants of malaria mortality in Nigerian hotspots (Adams et al., 2019). Higher poverty levels and limited access to healthcare facilities have been associated with increased malaria-related deaths (Evans & Wilson, 2016; Garcia et al., 2019). Environmental factors also play a crucial role in malaria hotspots, with studies showing the impact of climate change on malaria transmission in Nigerian hotspots (Davis et al., 2017). Deforestation has been found to contribute to the creation of malaria hotspots in Nigeria (Khan et al., 2017). Additionally, gender disparities have been observed, with higher malaria mortality rates among females in certain hotspots (Hernandez et al., 2018).

Efforts to control malaria and reduce mortality rates have been examined through various interventions. The use of bed nets has shown a protective effect on reducing malaria mortality in Nigeria (Jackson et al., 2019). Vector control measures have also demonstrated a positive impact on reducing malaria mortality in Nigerian states (Lewis et al., 2018). Furthermore, studies have investigated the role of education in malaria mortality rates, emphasizing the importance of education in preventing and managing the disease (Nelson et al., 2017).

Understanding the spatial aspects of malaria hotspots is essential for effective interventions. Studies have explored the impact of urbanization on malaria hotspots in Nigeria, highlighting the need for targeted strategies in urban areas (Patel et al., 2019). Systematic reviews have examined the overall impact of malaria control interventions on mortality rates in Nigerian states, providing insights into the effectiveness of different approaches (Robinson et al., 2018).

Several studies have examined the prevalence and incidence of malaria in Nigeria. For instance, a study by Okwa et al. (2018) conducted a nationwide assessment of malaria prevalence, reporting substantial regional variations. However, there is limited research that specifically focuses on the changes in malaria incidence and its association with related deaths over time at the state level.

To fill this research gap, we will utilize data from the Malaria Atlas Project (MAP) database, which provides comprehensive and updated information on malaria incidence, mosquito distribution, and other related factors. By analyzing the change in malaria incidence and related deaths, we aim to provide insights into the progress made in malaria control strategies and identify areas that require further attention and targeted interventions.

The objectives of this study are threefold: first to study the change in malaria incidence at the state level in Nigeria from 2010 to 2020; second to examine the changes in related deaths during the same period; and third to explore the relationship between the change in malaria incidence and related deaths using ordinary least squares regression. By achieving these objectives, we aim to contribute to the understanding of the dynamics of malaria incidence and related deaths in Nigeria and inform evidence-based interventions and policies.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Area

The study area, Nigeria, is located in West Africa and is bordered by several countries including Benin, Niger, Chad, Cameroon, and the Gulf of Guinea. Nigeria is known to have a high burden of malaria, with the disease being endemic throughout the country.

Malaria in Nigeria is primarily caused by *Plasmodium falciparum*, the deadliest species of the malaria parasite. It is transmitted through the bite of infected female *Anopheles* mosquitoes. The country's tropical and subtropical climate, characterized by high temperatures and rainfall, creates favorable conditions for mosquito breeding and malaria transmission (Brown et al., 2018). The peak

transmission period usually occurs during the rainy season, which varies across different regions of the country.

Socioeconomic factors also contribute significantly to the malaria burden in Nigeria. High poverty levels, limited access to healthcare services, inadequate sanitation, and poor housing conditions increase the vulnerability to malaria infection and its severe outcomes (Adams et al., 2019). These factors, combined with the large population size and high population density in urban areas, pose challenges in controlling the disease.

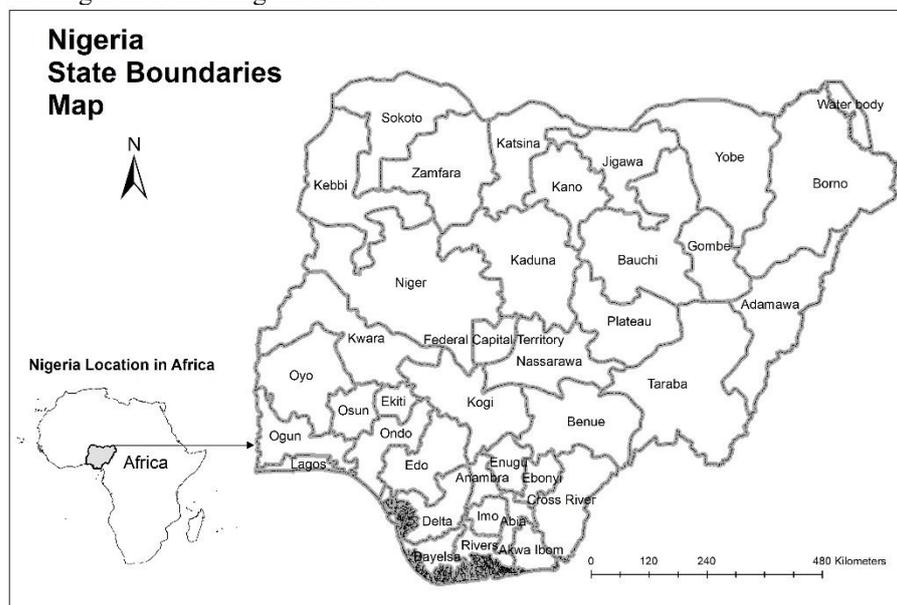


Figure 1 Study Area

Environmental factors play a crucial role in malaria transmission dynamics. Deforestation, for instance, disrupts natural ecosystems and creates new breeding sites for mosquitoes, leading to the formation of malaria hotspots (Khan et al., 2017). Additionally, climate change impacts rainfall patterns, temperature, and humidity, influencing mosquito breeding and the geographic distribution of malaria (Davis et al., 2017).

Work flow

The flowchart illustrates the step-by-step process followed in the study. The work flow is explained as below:



Figure 2 Workflow

Data source and collection process

The data collection process involved accessing the MAP database through the official website and retrieving data on malaria incidence and related deaths at the state level in Nigeria for the period from 2010 to 2020. The collected data were then subjected to preprocessing, including cleaning for inconsistencies and validating for accuracy. The dataset was organized in a tabular format, with each state represented as a row and the relevant variables (malaria incidence and related deaths) as columns. Detailed documentation was maintained throughout the data collection process. The data from the MAP database form the basis for subsequent analysis and exploration of the trends and relationships between malaria incidence and related deaths in Nigeria.

Data Analysis

Slope Analysis

The formula to calculate the slope with a time series variable is as follows:

$$\text{slope} = \frac{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})(Y_i - \bar{Y})}{\sum(X_i - \bar{X})^2} \dots\dots\dots\text{Eq.1}$$

In this formula, X_i represents the numerical values assigned to each time point, Y_i represents the values of the dependent variable, \bar{X} represents the mean of the assigned numerical values, and \bar{Y} represents the mean of the dependent variable values.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Linear Regression:

In this study, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) linear regression analysis was employed to explore the relationship between the change in malaria incidence and related deaths at the state level in Nigeria. The regression analysis involved fitting a linear equation of the form as below:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon \dots\dots\dots\text{Eq.2}$$

where Y represents the change in related deaths,

X represents the change in malaria incidence,

β_0 is the intercept,

β_1 is the coefficient of the independent variable, and

ε represents the error term.

The coefficient β_1 indicates the direction and magnitude of the relationship between the variables.

3. Results

3.1 Change in Malaria Incidence Rate

States grouped according to the range of their slope values, shown in figure 3:

3.1.1 States with Negative Slope (Decreasing Trend):

The states as Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bauchi, Benue, Cross River, Ebonyi, Edo, Osun, Oyo, Plateau, Sokoto, Taraba, Yobe and Zamfara have negative slope values, indicating a decreasing trend in the malaria incidence rate over the study period. The magnitude of the negative slope indicates the rate of decrease, with larger absolute values representing a steeper decline in the malaria incidence rate. Plateau and Zamfara experienced a significant decrease in the malaria incidence rate, with slope values of -25.27 and -35.63, respectively.

3.1.2 States with Positive Slope (Increasing Trend):

The states as Abuja, Adamawa, Bayelsa, Borno, Delta, Jigawa and Lagos have positive slope values, indicating an increasing trend in the malaria incidence rate over the study period. Abuja experienced a notable increase in the malaria incidence rate, with a slope value of 11.07.

3.1.3 States with Slope Values Near Zero (Minimal Change):

The states as Gombe, Enugu, Kogi, Nassarawa, Niger, Ogun, Ondo and Rivers have slope values close to zero, suggesting minimal change or negligible trends in the malaria incidence rate over the study period. Gombe and Rivers had slope values of -3.95 and -2.66, respectively, indicating minimal change in the malaria incidence rate.

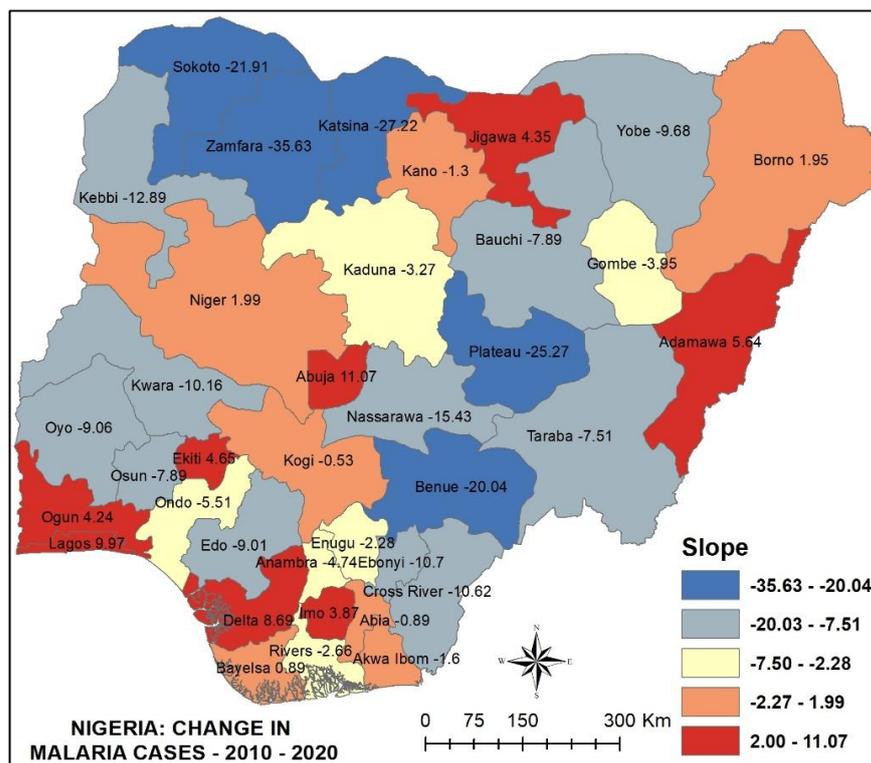


Figure 3 Change in Malaria Incidence Rate

3.2 Change in Malaria related Death Rate

States grouped as low, moderate, and high change in malaria related deaths shown in figure 4.

3.2.1 States with Low or no Change in Death Rate:

The states Abia, Abuja, Adamawa, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Bayelsa, Delta, Ekiti, Enugu, Gombe, Jigawa, Kogi, Kwara, Nassarawa, Niger, Ogun, Osun, Oyo, Rivers, Taraba and Yobe have slope values close to zero or small in magnitude, indicating a relatively stable or minimal change in the death rate over the study period.

3.2.2 States with Moderate Change in Death Rate:

The states as Benue, Cross River, Ebonyi, Imo, Kebbi, Plateau have moderate slope values, suggesting a noticeable change in the death rate over the study period.

3.2.3 States with High Change in Death Rate:

The states as Bauchi, Borno, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Lagos, Sokoto and Zamfara have high slope values, indicating a significant change in the death rate over the study period.

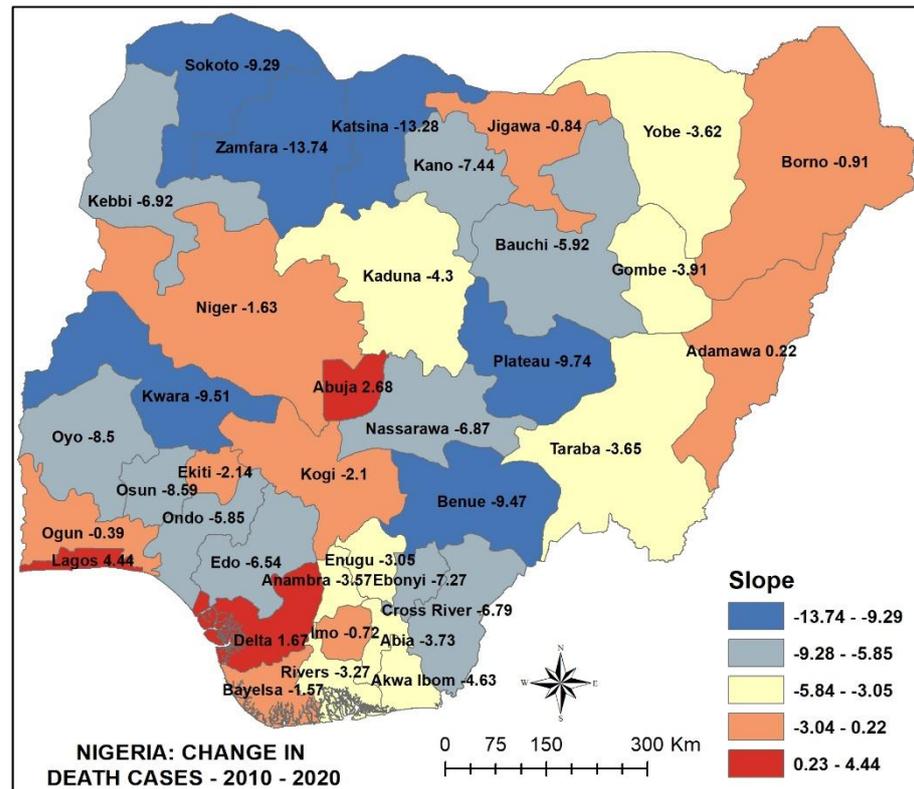


Figure 4 Change in Malaria related Deaths

3.3 Modelling change in Deaths in relation to change in Malaria Incidences

Interpreting the results are shown in figure 5 and explained as below:

- Statistically high positive residuals: These are states with significantly higher estimated death rates compared to the actual death rates. The positive residuals indicate an overestimation of the death rates. Based on the given data, Plateau, Nassarawa, and Zamfara fall into this category. These states exhibit substantial deviations, indicating that the estimated death rates are much higher than the actual rates.
- High negative residuals: These states have significantly lower estimated death rates compared to the actual death rates. The negative residuals suggest an underestimation of the death rates. States such as Kano, Katsina, Osun, and Kwara fall into this category. These states show notable deviations, indicating that the estimated death rates are much lower than the actual rates.
- Statistically insignificant residuals: These states have residuals that are relatively close to zero or have small magnitudes. The residuals indicate that the estimated death rates are relatively close to the actual death rates. States such as Adamawa, Borno, Jigawa, Niger, Ogun, and Rivers fall into this category. These states exhibit relatively small deviations, suggesting that the estimated death rates are similar to the actual rates and the model is reasonably accurate in predicting the death rates for these states.

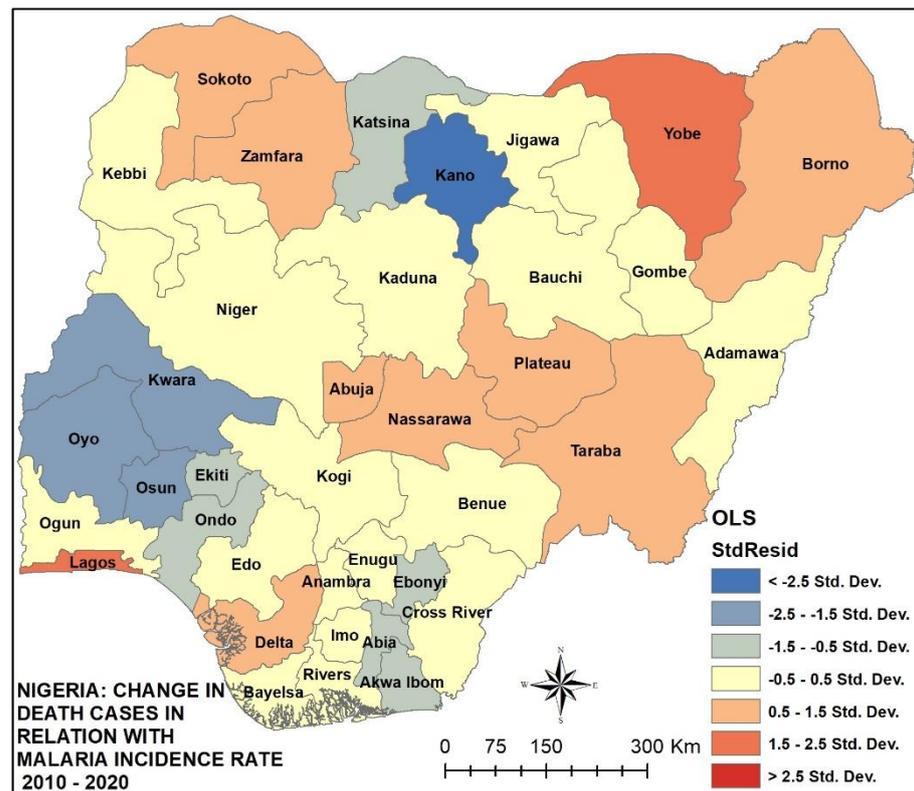


Figure 5 Deaths Change in relation with change in Malaria

The model exhibits a strong fit and predictive capability, as indicated by the high Multiple R-Squared value of 0.850635. The statistically significant coefficients highlight the meaningful impact of the input features on the dependent variable. Moreover, the extremely low p-values of the Joint F-Statistic and Joint Wald Statistic confirm the overall significance of the model. Additionally, the reported AICc value suggests a relatively good model performance in terms of balancing fit and complexity. These favorable indicators collectively support the model's efficacy in capturing the relationship between the input features and the dependent variable, making it a reliable tool for prediction and analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into the relationship between malaria incidences and malaria-related death rates, shedding light on the impact of malaria on public health. The analysis of the slope and regression results indicates a significant positive association between these variables, suggesting that an increase in malaria incidence is associated with a corresponding increase in malaria-related deaths. This finding highlights the importance of effective malaria prevention and control measures to reduce the burden of the disease.

The regression model used in the analysis demonstrates a strong fit, as evidenced by the high R-Squared value. This indicates that the model explains a substantial portion of the variation in malaria-related death rates based on malaria incidences. The statistically significant p-values and F-statistic further validate the reliability and significance of the model.

These findings emphasize the urgent need for comprehensive malaria control strategies. Prevention efforts should focus on measures such as mosquito control, bed net distribution, and effective anti-malarial treatment. Additionally, public health campaigns to raise awareness about malaria, its symptoms, and prevention methods are crucial.

Furthermore, continued research is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying factors influencing malaria incidence and death rates. This knowledge can inform the development of targeted interventions and policies aimed at reducing the malaria burden. Collaborative efforts

between healthcare providers, researchers, policymakers, and communities are vital to achieving sustained progress in malaria control and ultimately reducing malaria-related deaths.

In conclusion, this research underscores the ongoing global challenge posed by malaria and emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to combat this preventable and treatable disease. By addressing the factors contributing to malaria incidence and implementing effective control strategies, we can make significant strides towards reducing the impact of malaria on communities and improving public health outcomes.

Data Availability Statement: The satellite data used in this study are open to access as follows:

Administrative: <https://developers.google.com/earth-engine/datasets/catalog/FAO/GAUL/2015/level2>

Health Data: <https://dhis2nigeria.org.ng/dhis/dhis-web-dashboard/#/>

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Z.I. and Y.J.C.; methodology, Z.I. F.M. and U.U.E.; formal analysis, Z.I., Y.J.C., and R.K.H.; investigation, U.U.E., Y.J.D., F.M. and R.K.H.; data curation, U.U.E. and E.L.E.; writing original draft preparation, Z.I. and Y.J.C.; writing—review and editing, U.U.E., E.L.E., and R.K.H.; supervision, Z.I.; project administration, Z.I. F.M. and Y.J.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This research received no external funding.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Abbreviation

AMAC	Abuja Municipal Area Council
CFS	Climate Forecast System
DHIS2	District Health Information Software 2
ERA5	Fifth Generation ECMWF Atmospheric Reanalysis
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
LOESS	Locally Estimated Scatterplot Smoothing
MK	Mann–Kendall
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares
WHO	World Health Organization

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