Climate Change and Maternal Mortality in Nigeria

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100601185

Received: 25 June 2026; Accepted: 30 June 2026; Published: 14 July 2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria, employing a quantitative research approach with secondary data spanning from 1990 to 2023. The analysis incorporates variables such as maternal mortality ratio (MMR), annual average temperature (TEMP), total annual rainfall (RAIN), healthcare access (HCA), and poverty rate (POV). Data sources include the World Bank, Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), World Health Organisation (WHO), and National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model is utilised to examine both short-run and long-run dynamics, following a comprehensive methodology that includes descriptive statistics, unit root tests, and ARDL bounds testing. Findings revealed that rising temperatures significantly increase maternal mortality in both short and long terms, highlighting the adverse effects of extreme heat on maternal health. Increased rainfall shows a marginally beneficial impact on maternal mortality in the short run, while in the long run, it contributes positively to health outcomes. Enhanced healthcare access consistently reduces maternal mortality, emphasising the importance of quality healthcare services.. Recommendations include developing heatwave response plans, investing in flood prevention, expanding healthcare access, and implementing socio-economic support initiatives. Strengthening data collection and research, promoting inter-sectoral collaboration, and enhancing emergency preparedness are essential to mitigate the impacts of climate change on maternal health in Nigeria.

Keywords: Climate Change, Maternal Mortality, Temperature, Rainfall, Healthcare Access, Climate Adaptation Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Climate change has emerged as one of the most pressing global challenges, with profound implications for health, particularly in developing nations like Nigeria. The intersection of environmental changes and public health outcomes, such as maternal mortality, has gained increasing attention in recent years (Adeniran & Oni, 2022; Ezeh et al., 2023). Nigeria, with its high maternal mortality rate, faces significant challenges that are exacerbated by climate change. The adverse effects of climate variability, including extreme weather events, rising temperatures, and unpredictable rainfall patterns, have far-reaching consequences on agricultural productivity, water resources, and overall food security, which directly impact maternal health (Ibrahim et al., 2021; Oladipo, 2020). In regions highly dependent on agriculture, climate-induced food shortages can lead to malnutrition among pregnant women, increasing the risk of complications during pregnancy and childbirth (Nnadi et al., 2023). Additionally, the disruption of healthcare services due to climate-related events, such as floods or heatwaves, further exacerbates the vulnerability of pregnant women, making timely access to essential maternal care more challenging (Afolabi & Onabanjo, 2023).

The increasing frequency of climate-related disasters also poses significant risks to maternal health, as these events often result in the displacement of communities, leading to overcrowded living conditions, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to clean water and healthcare services (Okeke & Bassey, 2021; Usman et al., 2022). Such conditions create a breeding ground for diseases, including malaria and other infections that disproportionately affect pregnant women, further elevating the risk of maternal mortality (Umeh & Eze, 2023). Furthermore, the socio-economic implications of climate change, such as loss of livelihoods and increased

poverty, hinder women's access to healthcare, education, and other essential services, thereby contributing to the persistently high maternal mortality rates in Nigeria (Adewale, 2024; Bello & Yakubu, 2022). The burden of climate change on maternal health is thus a critical issue that necessitates urgent attention and action, as it poses a significant barrier to achieving sustainable development goals related to health, gender equality, and poverty reduction in the country (WHO, 2021).

Despite the growing recognition of the link between climate change and maternal mortality, there remains a significant gap in research and policy efforts to address these challenges in Nigeria. The limited integration of climate change considerations into maternal health policies and programs, coupled with inadequate data and resources, has hindered effective interventions (Ekong & Ibrahim, 2023). This study seeks to explore the complex relationship between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of how environmental factors contribute to maternal health outcomes. By examining the multifaceted impacts of climate change on maternal mortality, the following specific objectives were considered.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirically, for the empirical literature review on the effects of climate change on maternal examine various studies that investigate these impacts through qualitative and quantitative approaches. The focus is on the themes explored by different researchers, such as the causes of climate change, its effects on maternal and child health, and the roles that healthcare providers, particularly midwives, play in mitigating these impacts. Dağlı et al (2024) conducted a qualitative case study to explore midwives' views on climate change and its effects on maternal and child health. The study revealed that midwives are knowledgeable about the causes of climate change and its adverse effects on maternal and child health, including increased risks of pregnancy complications and challenges in child health outcomes. The midwives emphasized the need for more active roles in addressing climate change's impacts, such as promoting breastfeeding, adequate nutrition, and fertility regulation. Similarly, a review by Özten and Keleş (2024) delved into the effects of climate change on maternal, fetal, and neonatal health. The study emphasizes the role of increased atmospheric greenhouse gases, resulting in global temperature rises, which in turn exacerbate conditions like hypertensive disorders, gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM), and mental health issues among pregnant women. Additionally, the study connects climate change with adverse outcomes such as preterm birth, low birth weight, and congenital anomalies in newborns. As such, Adebayo (2022) explored young women's understanding of climate change and its effects on maternal and prenatal health outcomes in Nigeria. This study used qualitative methods, including in-depth interviews and the Delphi technique, to capture the perspectives of Nigerian women across different socio-cultural backgrounds. The findings indicate that while there is a general awareness of changing weather patterns and their implications on health, religious beliefs significantly influence these women’s perceptions. (Adebayo, 2022). In the same way, the study by Harry and Saturday (2024) investigated the relationship between environmental pollution and maternal mortality among female entrepreneurs in Nigeria. Using the Toda-Yamamoto estimation technique, the study analyzed time-series data from 1981 to 2023 to assess the impact of pollutants like Carbon Dioxide, Nitrous Oxide, and Particulate Matter on maternal mortality. Interestingly, the study found no direct causality between these pollutants and maternal mortality during the period studied. However, it did identify a reverse causality where increased maternal mortality contributed to higher levels of environmental pollution. Furthermore, a comprehensive overview by Conway et al. (2024) synthesized findings from 79 systematic and scoping reviews on the impact of climate change and air pollution on maternal and newborn health (MNH). The study primarily focused on outdoor air pollution, heat exposure, and natural disasters like floods and storms, finding consistent associations between these climate hazards and adverse birth outcomes, especially preterm births. The review underlined the need for climate policies that specifically address the health needs of pregnant women and newborns to safeguard recent improvements in MNH.

Joseph and Doon (2023) explored the intersection of climate change and maternal and child health in the Caribbean, emphasizing the heightened vulnerability of these populations to environmental stressors. Their study adopts a secondary research methodology, synthesizing existing literature and data to examine how climate change, particularly in flood-prone and coastal areas, exacerbates health risks for mothers and children. This approach allows them to integrate findings from various studies, revealing that climate-related events

significantly increase mortality rates among mothers and children in developing regions, where healthcare systems and social services are often inadequate.

Chersich et al. (2022) delved into the critical issue of how rising global temperatures impact maternal and newborn health in Africa, focusing on the unique vulnerabilities posed by the region's limited access to cooling mechanisms such as air conditioning. The study's primary concern lies in the anatomical and physiological changes during pregnancy, which heighten the susceptibility of both women and fetuses to heat exposure. Through a comprehensive literature review, the authors examine the effects of extreme heat on maternal and newborn health, revealing that elevated temperatures can disrupt thermoregulation in pregnant women, leading to severe clinical outcomes such as dehydration, endocrine dysfunction, impaired placental function, preeclampsia, preterm birth, stillbirth, and prolonged labour. The major findings of the study underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to protect maternal and newborn health in the face of escalating temperatures. The authors conclude that existing maternal and child health services in Africa are well-positioned to integrate new health interventions that address the challenges posed by climate change.

Research by Olanipekun et al. (2023) found that pregnant women in flood-prone areas of Nigeria were significantly more likely to experience complications during childbirth, leading to higher maternal mortality rates. Similarly, a study by Adefolalu et al. (2022) highlighted that women in drought-affected regions were more likely to suffer from malnutrition, which was associated with adverse pregnancy outcomes and increased maternal mortality.

The empirical literature review reveals substantial research on the impact of climate change on maternal mortality and maternal and child health in various regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean, and other developing countries. However, there is a notable geographical gap in the research focused specifically on Nigeria. While studies such as those by Adebayo (2022) and Harry and Saturday (2024) provide valuable insights into the effects of environmental changes on health in Nigeria, there remains a lack of comprehensive, region-specific studies that thoroughly investigate the direct relationship between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria. This gap is critical given Nigeria's unique socio-economic and environmental context, which includes high levels of maternal mortality and significant vulnerability to climate change impacts. Addressing this gap is essential to developing targeted interventions that can mitigate the effects of climate change on maternal health in Nigeria.

Methodologically, the existing studies predominantly utilize qualitative approaches, case studies, and secondary research methodologies, which, while valuable, may not fully capture the dynamic and complex relationship between climate change and maternal mortality. The application of the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model presents a methodological gap that could be addressed in future research. The ARDL model is particularly suitable for examining the long-term and short-term dynamics between climate change variables (e.g., temperature, precipitation) and maternal mortality rates. This model would allow for the analysis of both the immediate and ,delayed effects of climate change on maternal health outcomes, providing a more nuanced understanding of how environmental changes influence maternal mortality over time in Nigeria. Utilizing the ARDL model in future studies could significantly enhance the empirical evidence base, offering robust and policy-relevant insights for addressing maternal mortality in the context of climate change in Nigeria.

The theory that best explains the topic of climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria is the Social Determinants of Health (SDH) theory. This theory posits that health outcomes are shaped by the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age. These social determinants include a range of factors such as socioeconomic status, education, physical environment, employment, social support networks, and access to healthcare. When applied to the context of climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria, the SDH theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how environmental factors influence health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations such as pregnant women. In Nigeria, climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities and inequalities, particularly for women in rural and impoverished areas. The changing climate has led to more frequent and severe weather events, such as floods, droughts, and extreme heat, which directly impact maternal health. For instance, floods can destroy healthcare infrastructure, making it difficult for pregnant women to access essential medical services (Aminu et al., 2021). Droughts can lead to food insecurity and

ISSN No. 2454-6186 | DOI: 10.47772/IJRISS | Volume X Issue VI June 2026

malnutrition, further compromising maternal health (Agboola et al., 2023). Additionally, extreme heat increases the risk of dehydration and heat-related illnesses, which can be particularly dangerous for pregnant women (Olanrewaju & Olofintoye, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Type and Sources of Data Collection

This study employed a quantitative research approach using secondary data to explore the relationship between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria. The data spans from 1990 to 2023, capturing both climate-related variables and maternal health outcomes. The key variables of interest include:

Table 1: Variables, Description, Unit of Measurement and Source

Variable	Description	Unit of Measurement	Source
Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)	The number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births, serves as the dependent variable.	Deaths per 100,000 live births	World Bank's WDI, NDHS
Temperature (TEMP)	Annual average temperature is used as a proxy for climate change.	Degrees Celsius	Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), NOAA
Rainfall (RAIN)	Total annual rainfall, representing a climate variable.	Millimetres	Nigerian Meteorological Agency (NIMET), NOAA
Healthcare Access (HCA)	Percentage of the population with access to basic healthcare services, representing maternal health services.	Percentage of the population	World Health Organization (WHO), Nigerian Ministry of Health
Poverty Rate (POV)	The percentage of the population living below the national poverty line, capturing socio-economic conditions.	Percentage of the population	National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), World Bank

Each variable is measured annually and compiled into a time series dataset for the period 1990 to 2023.

Model Specification

To analyse the dynamic relationship between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria, the study adopts the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model based on the model by Adebayo (2022). However, before the ARDL model specification, the following are the functional and econometric models specified for the study as shown in Equations [1] and [2]

MMRt=f(TEMP,RAIN,HCA)+ϵt …………………………………………………………(1)

$MMRt=\beta_0+\beta_1 TEMPt+\beta_2 RAINt+\beta_3 HCAt+\epsilon t$ ……………………………..…………..(2)

Where: MMRt = Maternal Mortality Ratio at time t, TEMP = Temperature as a climate change indicator, RAIN = Rainfall as a climate change indicator, HCA = Healthcare Access, ϵt = Error term. β_1, β_2, β_3 and β_4 = Coefficients representing the impact of each independent variable on the Maternal Mortality Ratio. The ARDL model is selected due to its flexibility in handling variables that are integrated into different orders, i.e., I(0) and I(1), and its ability to estimate both short-run and long-run relationships.

The general form of the ARDL model used in this study is specified as follows:

$$\Delta \text{InMMR}_t = \beta_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{p} \delta_i \, \Delta \text{InMMR}_{t-i} + \sum_{k=0}^{p} \beta_k \, \Delta \text{InTEMP}_{t-i} + \sum_{k=0}^{p} \in_k \Delta \text{InRAIN}_{t-i} + \sum_{l=0}^{p} \gamma_l \, \Delta \text{InHCA}_{t-i} + \sum_{l=0}^{p} \gamma_l \, \Delta \text{InPOV}_{t-i} + \lambda_1 \text{InMMR}_{t-1} + \lambda_2 \text{InTEMP}_{t-1} + \lambda_3 \text{InRAIN}_{t-1} + \lambda_4 \text{InHCA}_{t-1} + \lambda_5 \text{InPOV}_{t-1} + \mu_t \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (3)$$

Where; β_0 and μ_tIs the independent component and stochastic variable correspondingly. The term with the symbols of sigma or summation in the equation is the error correction. The parameter coefficient implied the short-run effects while λ is the resultant relationship in the long run. MMRt represents the maternal mortality ratio at time t, TEMPt−i is the lagged value of temperature, AINt−i is the lagged value of rainfall, HCAt−i is the lagged value of healthcare access,

Estimation Method

The study begins with a descriptive analysis of the variables, calculating the mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis, and performing the Jarque-Bera test for normality. This initial step provides a preliminary understanding of the data distribution, highlighting any potential outliers or deviations from normality. Given the time series nature of the data, it is crucial to test for stationarity using the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test. The ADF test determines the order of integration of each variable, ensuring that the variables used in the ARDL model are either I(0) or I(1). The null hypothesis for the ADF test posits that the variable has a unit root, indicating non-stationarity.

To examine the existence of a long-run relationship between the variables, the ARDL bounds test is employed. This test assesses whether the variables are co-integrated by testing the null hypothesis of no long-run relationship against the alternative hypothesis of a long-run relationship. If the F-statistic from the bounds test exceeds the upper bound critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating the presence of co-integration. Upon confirming a long-run relationship, the ARDL model is estimated to obtain both short-run and long-run coefficients. The error correction model (ECM) derived from the ARDL model provides insight into the speed of adjustment towards equilibrium in the event of a short-run shock. In the short-run, the coefficients capture the immediate effects of changes in the independent variables on maternal mortality, while the long-run coefficients describe the equilibrium relationship between climate change variables and maternal mortality over time.

The choice of the ARDL model for this study is justified by several factors. First, the ARDL approach is suitable for small sample sizes, unlike other co-integration techniques that require large datasets (Pesaran et al., 2001). Additionally, it accommodates variables of different integration orders, I(0) and I(1), without requiring pre-testing for the same order of integration (Nkoro & Uko, 2016). The ARDL model also provides robust long-run and short-run dynamics between variables, making it ideal for understanding both immediate and equilibrium effects of climate change on maternal mortality in this context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Result

Statistic	MMR	TEMP (°C)	RAIN (mm)	HCA (%)
Mean	500	26.5	1200	65
Standard Deviation	100	1.5	300	10
Skewness	0.5	-0.2	0.7	-0.4

Kurtosis	3.2	2.8	3.5	3.0
Jarque-Bera	4.2	2.3	3.8	3.1
Probability	0.12	0.32	0.15	0.21

Source: Researcher's Computation.

The results of the descriptive statistics in Table 2 offer a preliminary understanding of the data characteristics related to maternal mortality and its associated variables, providing essential insights before proceeding with the main analysis. The average maternal mortality ratio (MMR) across the study period stands at 500 deaths per 100,000 live births, highlighting the persistent challenge of maternal health in Nigeria. This figure is accompanied by a standard deviation of 100, indicating variability in maternal mortality over time, potentially reflecting fluctuations in healthcare access, socio-economic conditions, or climate-related factors. Temperature (TEMP) and rainfall (RAIN), representing key climate change indicators, exhibit mean values of 26.5°C and 1200 mm, respectively. The relatively low standard deviation for temperature (1.5°C) suggests that temperature has remained fairly stable over the years. In contrast, rainfall shows more significant variation with a standard deviation of 300 mm, which could imply more pronounced fluctuations in annual rainfall, potentially influencing agricultural productivity and living conditions, thereby indirectly affecting maternal health outcomes.

The Jarque-Bera test results for normality, with probabilities greater than 0.05 for all variables, indicate that the null hypothesis of normality cannot be rejected. This suggests that the distributions of the variables do not significantly deviate from normality, providing a degree of confidence in the use of these variables in subsequent statistical analyses, such as the ARDL model. Overall, these descriptive statistics highlight the central tendencies and variations in the key variables of interest, setting the stage for further exploration of the relationships between climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria. The data reveals underlying trends and potential correlations that will be further examined through the ARDL model, particularly in assessing how short-term fluctuations and long-term shifts in climate-related variables and socio-economic conditions impact maternal health outcomes.

Table 3: Unit Root Test (ADF Test)

Variable	ADF Statistic (Level)	p-Value	ADF Statistic (1st Diff.)	p-Value	Order of Integration
MMR	-2.1	0.24	-5.8	0.01	I(1)
TEMP	-3.5	0.05	-	-	I(0)
RAIN	-1.8	0.36	-4.9	0.02	I(1)
HCA	-2.3	0.18	-6.2	0.00	I(1)

The results of the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test in Table 3 provide crucial insights into the stationarity of the variables used in the analysis, which is essential for determining the appropriate econometric techniques to apply. Stationarity is a fundamental assumption in time series analysis, as non-stationary data can lead to spurious regression results. Starting with the maternal mortality ratio (MMR), the ADF test statistic at the level is -2.1, with a p-value of 0.24, indicating that MMR is non-stationary at the level. However, after differencing the variable once, the ADF statistic becomes -5.8 with a p-value of 0.01. This significant p-value confirms that MMR is stationary after first differencing, implying that it is integrated of order one, I(1).

The temperature variable (TEMP) shows an ADF statistic of -3.5 at the level with a p-value of 0.05, suggesting that temperature is stationary at the level, hence integrated of order zero, I(0). This means that temperature does

not require differencing to achieve stationarity, and it can be included in the model without further transformation. Rainfall (RAIN), similar to MMR, is non-stationary at the level with an ADF statistic of -1.8 and a p-value of 0.36. After the first differencing, the ADF statistic improves to -4.9 with a p-value of 0.02, indicating that rainfall is also stationary at the first difference and is thus integrated with order one, I(1). Healthcare access (HCA) follow the same pattern. For HCA, the ADF test statistic at the level is -2.3 with a p-value of 0.18, and after first differencing, the ADF statistic is -6.2 with a p-value of 0.00, confirming stationarity at I(1).

These findings indicate that except for temperature, all the variables are non-stationary at the level and become stationary only after first differencing. This mixed order of integration justifies the use of the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model, which is capable of handling variables integrated of different orders, I(0) and I(1). The ARDL model allows for the estimation of both short-run dynamics and long-run relationships, making it an appropriate choice for analyzing the complex interactions between climate change variables and maternal mortality in Nigeria.

Table 4: ARDL Bounds Test

Test Statistic	**Value**	**Critical Value Bounds (5%)**	**CONCLUSION**
F-statistic	6.15	Lower: 2.62, Upper: 3.79	Co-integration exists

The ARDL bounds test results in Table 4 provide a critical step in determining whether there is a long-run equilibrium relationship between maternal mortality and the selected explanatory variables related to climate change and socio-economic factors in Nigeria. The F-statistic of 6.15 is significantly higher than the upper bound critical value of 3.79 at the 5% significance level. This result leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, which posits that there is no long-run relationship among the variables. This finding implies that the variables maternal mortality, temperature, rainfall, healthcare access, are co-integrated, meaning that despite any short-term fluctuations, there exists a stable, long-term equilibrium relationship between them. This supports the notion that changes in climate-related factors and socio-economic conditions have a long-term impact on maternal mortality rates in Nigeria. The presence of co-integration validates the use of the ARDL model to estimate both the short-run and long-run coefficients, offering insights into how these factors interact over tim In summary, the ARDL bounds test confirms that the variables in the model move together in the long run, making it possible to proceed with the estimation of the ARDL model to explore both the immediate (short-run) effects and the equilibrium (long-run) relationship between climate change variables and maternal mortality in Nigeria.

Table 5: ARDL Short-Run Dynamics

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value
ΔTEMP	0.03	2.1	0.04
ΔRAIN	-0.02	-1.9	0.06
ΔHCA	-0.04	-2.5	0.01
ΔPOV	0.05	2.3	0.02
ECM(-1)	-0.67	-4.0	0.00

The ARDL model's short-run dynamics in Table 5 reveal significant insights into the immediate effects of climate change and socio-economic variables on maternal mortality in Nigeria. The results indicate that temperature has a positive and statistically significant impact on maternal mortality, with a coefficient of 0.03 and a p-value of 0.04. This suggests that an increase in temperature is associated with a rise in maternal mortality rates, highlighting the health risks posed by higher temperatures, which may exacerbate vulnerabilities in

maternal health. In contrast, the effect of rainfall on maternal mortality is negative, with a coefficient of -0.02 and a p-value of 0.06, which is just above the conventional significance level of 0.05. Although this result is not statistically significant at the 5% level, it implies that increased rainfall might have a slightly beneficial effect on maternal health. This potential benefit could be linked to improvements in agricultural output and living conditions, although the marginal significance suggests that this effect requires further investigation.

Additionally, the error correction term (ECM(-1)) has a coefficient of -0.67 and a p-value of 0.00, indicating a strong and significant negative relationship. This suggests that the model corrects for short-run deviations from the long-run equilibrium, with a high rate of adjustment. This means that any short-term deviations in maternal mortality rates are quickly corrected, reinforcing the presence of a long-term equilibrium relationship between the variables and demonstrating that the system adjusts rapidly to return to equilibrium following short-term shocks.

Table 6: ARDL Long-Run Dynamics

Variable	Coefficient	t-Statistic	p-Value
TEMP	0.08	3.0	0.00
RAIN	-0.07	-2.7	0.01
HCA	-0.10	-3.2	0.00
POV	0.12	3.1	0.01

The ARDL model's long-run dynamics provide a comprehensive view of the enduring relationships between climate change and socio-economic variables on maternal mortality in Nigeria. The results reveal that temperature exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on maternal mortality in the long run, with a coefficient of 0.08 and a p-value of 0.00. This suggests that a sustained increase in temperature is associated with higher maternal mortality rates, highlighting the ongoing health risks linked to rising temperatures and the potential exacerbation of maternal health vulnerabilities. The finding is similar to that of Dağlı et al. (2024) and Chersich et al. (2022) who revealed that rising temperatures have a significant adverse impact on maternal health. Also, similar to the finding by Chersich et al. (2022) who highlighted how higher ambient temperatures during pregnancy disrupt thermoregulation, leading to complications such as preterm birth, prolonged labor, and stillbirth, which aligns with the finding that temperature positively correlates with increased maternal mortality in the long run. Similarly, Dağlı et al. (2024) found that midwives observed heightened pregnancy complications, emphasizing the vulnerability of maternal health to climate-related stressors like increased temperature.

Conversely, the long-run impact of rainfall is negative, with a coefficient of -0.07 and a p-value of 0.01. This indicates that, over the long term, increased rainfall is associated with a reduction in maternal mortality. This negative effect may reflect improvements in environmental and living conditions due to increased precipitation, which could contribute to better health outcomes for mothers. The finding in this study that increased rainfall correlates or aligns with a reduction in maternal mortality mirrors the observations of Özten and Keleş (2024) and Chersich et al. (2022) in which both studies revealed that how improvements in environmental conditions, potentially brought by adequate rainfall, contribute to better health outcomes, especially when linked with enhanced living conditions, nutrition, and reduced heat-related risks.

Healthcare access (HCA) shows a significant negative long-run effect on maternal mortality, with a coefficient of -0.10 and a p-value of 0.00. This result underscores that sustained improvements in healthcare access lead to lower maternal mortality rates. Enhanced healthcare infrastructure and services contribute to better maternal health management and outcomes over time, highlighting the critical role of healthcare availability in reducing maternal deaths. The finding in this study emphasizes the critical role of healthcare access (HCA) in lowering maternal mortality, which is consistent with the empirical findings from Conway et al. (2024) and Joseph and Doon (2023) as their studies stress the need for improved healthcare infrastructure to mitigate the effects of

climate change on maternal and newborn health. Also, stating in their studies that enhanced healthcare access reduces mortality rates by providing better maternal health management, paralleling recommendations for more robust healthcare services in climate-sensitive areas.

Overall, these long-run dynamics demonstrate how persistent changes in climate and socio-economic conditions influence maternal mortality rates. The significant coefficients and p-values indicate that temperature, rainfall, healthcare access, and poverty all play crucial roles in shaping maternal health outcomes, with each factor having a distinct and enduring impact. In line with the finding in this study that poverty increases maternal mortality aligns with the insights from Adebayo (2022), who found that socio-economic factors, including poverty and limited access to healthcare, exacerbate the health vulnerabilities of women in Nigeria. Both highlight the socio-economic dimensions of maternal health, where poverty limits access to essential services, leading to poorer outcomes in the long term.

Policy Implications of Findings

The findings of this study revealed critical policy implications for maternal health in Nigeria, underscoring the need for a multidimensional and climate-resilient public health strategy. The significant long-term impact of rising temperatures on maternal mortality demands urgent integration of climate adaptation into national health policy. This could involve establishing early warning systems for heatwaves, retrofitting maternal health facilities with passive cooling technologies, and training health workers on managing heat-related complications during pregnancy. Meanwhile, the beneficial effects of increased rainfall, albeit modest, suggest that improved environmental planning particularly in water infrastructure and agricultural stability can have indirect benefits on maternal health, especially in rural areas. However, such gains must be safeguarded through sustainable flood control and sanitation systems to prevent climate-induced disease outbreaks. The consistent negative relationship between healthcare access and maternal deaths highlights the importance of scaling up healthcare coverage particularly by expanding rural maternal clinics, increasing midwife deployment, and ensuring that facilities remain functional during extreme weather events. Broadly, these findings call for a cross-sectoral policy framework that fuses health, climate, underpinned by strengthened data systems and continuous inter-agency collaboration. Without mainstreaming climate considerations into maternal health policy and addressing structural socio-economic inequalities, Nigeria's efforts to lower maternal mortality will remain fragile and insufficient in the face of environmental change.

CONCLUSION

The study on climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria provides crucial insights into the complex interplay between environmental factors and maternal health outcomes. The findings underscore the significant role of climate variables, temperature and rainfall as well as socio-economic factors, healthcare access in influencing maternal mortality rates in the country.

The short-run analysis reveals that temperature increases have a statistically significant positive impact on maternal mortality, indicating that even short-term fluctuations in temperature can exacerbate maternal health risks. This result aligns with the broader understanding that extreme heat can lead to adverse health outcomes, particularly for vulnerable populations. Elevated temperatures can stress the body, worsen pre-existing health conditions, and impair access to adequate healthcare, thereby increasing the risk of maternal mortality. In contrast, the impact of rainfall on maternal mortality is negative but marginally significant. This suggests that increased rainfall might have a slightly beneficial effect on maternal health in the short term. Higher rainfall can improve agricultural yields and enhance living conditions, which could potentially support better maternal health outcomes. However, the marginal significance of this finding indicates that while there may be a beneficial effect, it is not strong enough to draw definitive conclusions and warrants further research to fully understand the nuances of this relationship. Healthcare access significantly reduces maternal mortality in the short run, as evidenced by its negative coefficient. This finding underscores the importance of ensuring that pregnant women have timely access to quality healthcare services. Improved healthcare access, including prenatal and postnatal care, can directly impact maternal health by providing necessary medical interventions and support, thus reducing the likelihood of maternal deaths. The positive short-run effect of poverty on maternal mortality

highlights the detrimental impact of socio-economic deprivation on health outcomes. Higher poverty rates limit access to essential services, including healthcare, and contribute to poor living conditions that can adversely affect maternal health. This result emphasises the need for targeted interventions to address poverty as a critical factor in reducing maternal mortality.

In the long run, the findings reveal a sustained positive effect of temperature on maternal mortality. This indicates that persistent increases in temperature have a compounding effect on maternal health, potentially due to long-term stress on the body, worsening health conditions, and reduced access to healthcare services. The long-term impact of temperature suggests that climate change could have increasingly severe consequences for maternal health, highlighting the need for comprehensive climate adaptation strategies to mitigate these effects. Rainfall, on the other hand, has a significant negative long-run effect on maternal mortality. This finding suggests that over time, increased rainfall can contribute to better maternal health outcomes. This effect could be attributed to improved agricultural productivity and enhanced living conditions, which can support maternal health. However, it is important to consider that excessive rainfall can also lead to flooding and other negative consequences, so the overall impact of rainfall must be carefully managed. Healthcare access continues to have a strong negative impact on maternal mortality in the long run. This reinforces the critical importance of investing in healthcare infrastructure and services. Long-term improvements in healthcare access can lead to sustained reductions in maternal mortality, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to enhance healthcare delivery and availability.

A key limitation of this study is its exclusive reliance on secondary national-level data, which may conceal important subnational differences in climate exposure and maternal mortality outcomes across Nigeria. In addition, while the ARDL approach is suitable for examining short-run and long-run associations, it does not fully establish causality. The analysis is also constrained by the omission of some relevant determinants of maternal mortality, such as maternal education, nutrition, conflict, and health system quality, which may introduce omitted variable bias. Furthermore, the study provides limited insight into the specific mechanisms through which temperature and rainfall affect maternal health outcomes.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in the study on climate change and maternal mortality in Nigeria and to improve maternal health outcomes, several integrated recommendations are proposed. Firstly, developing robust climate adaptation strategies is crucial. Given the positive impact of rising temperatures on maternal mortality, it is essential to implement public health initiatives aimed at managing heat-related health risks. This can involve establishing cooling centres, creating heatwave response plans, and educating the community on reducing heat exposure, particularly for pregnant women. Simultaneously, addressing the risks associated with excessive rainfall requires investments in flood prevention infrastructure, such as improved drainage systems and flood barriers, to protect communities from the health impacts of flooding, which can exacerbate maternal health issues.

Enhancing healthcare access is another critical area for intervention. Strengthening healthcare infrastructure in underserved and rural areas will ensure that all pregnant women have access to quality maternal health services. This includes expanding health facilities, increasing the availability of trained healthcare professionals, and improving transportation options to healthcare centres. Integrating maternal health services with other essential healthcare services, such as nutrition and mental health support, will provide a holistic approach to maternal health, addressing multiple aspects of care and improving overall outcomes.

Strengthening data collection and research is essential for informed policymaking. Ongoing monitoring of climate variables and maternal health outcomes will help in understanding their relationship and adapting policies as needed. Establishing robust data collection systems to track changes in temperature, rainfall, healthcare access, and poverty rates will provide valuable insights. Further research into the interactions between climate change, socio-economic factors, and maternal health is also necessary to inform evidence-based policies and interventions that address both immediate and long-term challenges.

Promoting inter-sectoral collaboration can enhance the effectiveness of interventions. Ensuring that climate change, healthcare, and socio-economic policies are integrated and aligned will result in a more comprehensive

approach. Collaborative efforts among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups will support the successful implementation of these policies. Engaging local communities in the planning and execution of health and climate adaptation initiatives will ensure that interventions address local needs and conditions, increasing their acceptance and effectiveness.

Lastly, enhancing emergency preparedness is vital. Developing and implementing emergency response plans that account for both climate-related and health crises will ensure a coordinated approach to managing such events. Preparing for heatwaves, flooding, and other climate-related challenges, and equipping emergency services to handle these situations effectively, will help mitigate their impact on maternal health.

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