

## ABSTRACT

Geophagy the deliberate and frequent ingestion of soil commonly regarded as a form of pica –an appetite for non-food substances is a widely reported practice, especially among people in the tropics. There are number of reasons put forward for the habit of consuming soil. There are three major postulates that have been advanced to explain the physiological causes of geophagy: among them, iron deficiency. In Kenya there has been a campaign on compulsory iron supplementation. However, it has not been established whether the supplementation has reduced the prevalence of anemia and its related health implications including geophagy. A cross-sectional study was carried out in three rural based health centers, in Likuyani sub County of Kakamega County. A sample of 180 respondents was used. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. The healthcare providers were also interviewed on the access and coverage of iron supplements to the pregnant mothers. Data was analyzed using descriptive analysis, chi square and logistic regression. Results of this study indicated that 60% of pregnant women were geophagic. Age of the mother and spouse's education level were the predictors of geophagy. More than two thirds of the respondents indicated that they have never received iron supplements in the health facility. Those who had ever received indicated that they were given tablets to last seven days at their first visit to the ante natal clinic. Interviews with the healthcare providers in the facility indicated that they had less supply of the supplements and therefore resulted to giving dietary advice to the pregnant mothers. The prevalence of geophagy in Kenya still remains high despite compulsory iron supplementation. Compulsory iron supplementation for pregnant women in Kenya has not been achieved since there are inadequate supplies in the rural areas.